Vol. 24 No. 4 Winter 2011

EAGLE Times

The Journal of the Eagle Society

Remembering Britain's National Strip Cartoon Weekly 1950 - 1969

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL EAGLE TIMES' READERS

EAGLE Times

Vol 24 No 4 Winter 2011

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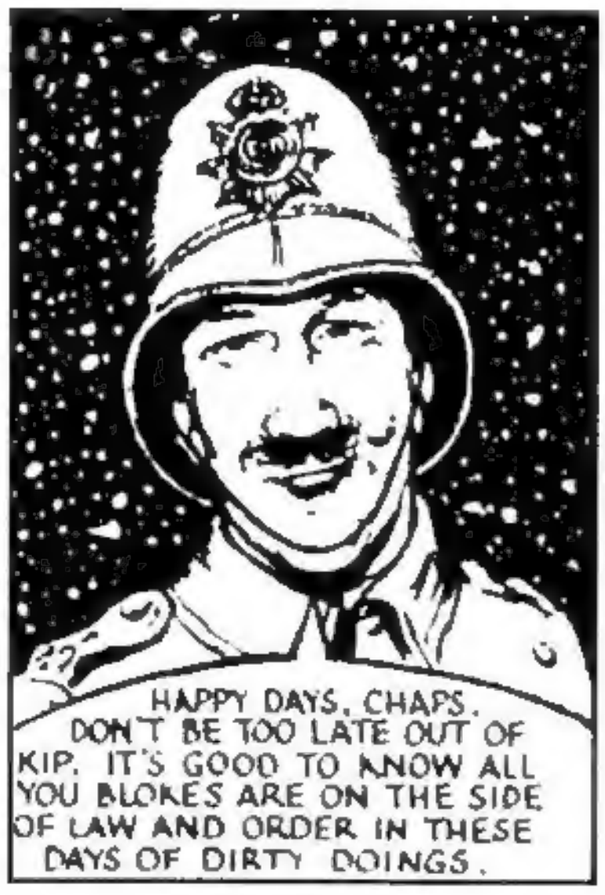
Ron by Ron


HAPPY DAYS, CHAPS. DON'T BE TOO LATE OUT OF KIP. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW ALL YOU BLOKES ARE ON THE SIDE OF LAW AND ORDER IN THESE DAYS OF DIRTY DOINGS.

Christmas with PC49

Dan Dare Annual 1991
(Art: David Pugh)

Pepys card games

Boy's Own Paper, Christmas 1954
(Art: Frank Bellamy)

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The quarterly journal of the *Eagle Society*.

The *Society* is dedicated to the memory of Britain's National picture strip Weekly - ***EAGLE***.

Hello Again,

A Merry Christmas to all our readers! So read the front page banner on Christmas ***Eagles*** *for several years. We knew in December when the magazine popped through the letter box that we could expect an issue with a good helping of of Christmas fare. Some issues excelled with specials such as 'The Editor's Nightmare', 'Chicko's Christmas Party' and some of the regular characters such as PC49 would have a Yuletide themes to the episode. And of course, for six weeks prior to the event we would have gift ideas given to us with the Christmas supplements added to each issue.*

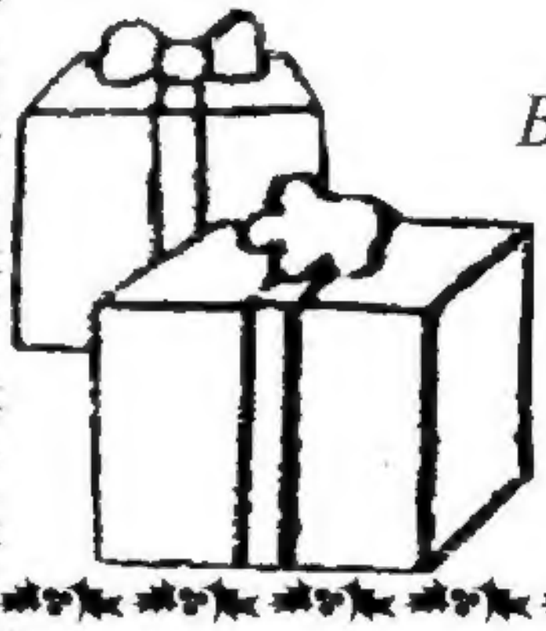
Another feature of Christmas for us was the ***Eagle*** *Annual that most of us would have found among our gifts. Today, you can count the number of comic annuals available on one hand. Gone are the days (sadly) that you could walk into a bookshop and find a six foot square plinth full of different comic annuals. Not only annuals from the comics but cowboy, animal, sports, ships, aircraft annuals etc., would be found in most displays. For this issue Alan Vince tells of how he put the 1987 and 1991 Dan Dare Annuals together for David Hunt. James Howard also completes his look at the* ***Eagle*** *Annuals from 1971 to 1975. Although* ***Eagle*** *had finished in 1969 these annuals continued for another five years.*

Also in this issue we have the story of the Boy's Own Paper, a magazine that ran for nearly ninety years and had a similar start to ***Eagle*** *in as much as it was published to challenge the unsavoury magazines around at the time such as the "penny dreadfuls". Both magazines were started by a religious editor.*

Next year's ***Eagle*** *Meeting will be back to Southport by popular request. The Dukes Folly Hotel did us proud in 2010 and so it will be a pleasure going there again. The prices are very reasonable so get your £50 deposits off and reserve your place as they are limited. More details in the Supplement. Unfortunately we can't quite have it on Eagle's birthday as hotels in Southport are full owing to the Grand National horse race in neighbouring Liverpool around the 14th April. The dates will be Tuesday 17th to Thursday 19th April.*

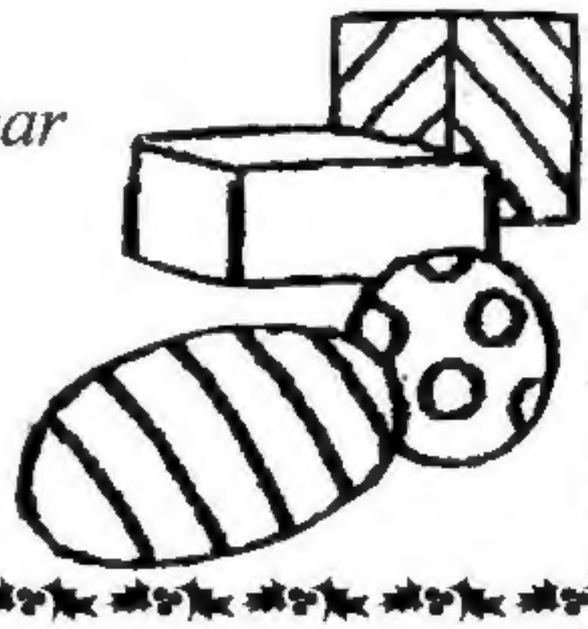
Our thanks to the many early subscribers for 2012. If you haven't subscribed for next year yet, there is still time if you are quick, to qualify for the £2 discount offer. We hope you think the price represents good value for money - as someone at the ***Eagle*** *Society dinner in Berkshire this year commented "The price is only the same as half a tank of petrol!"*

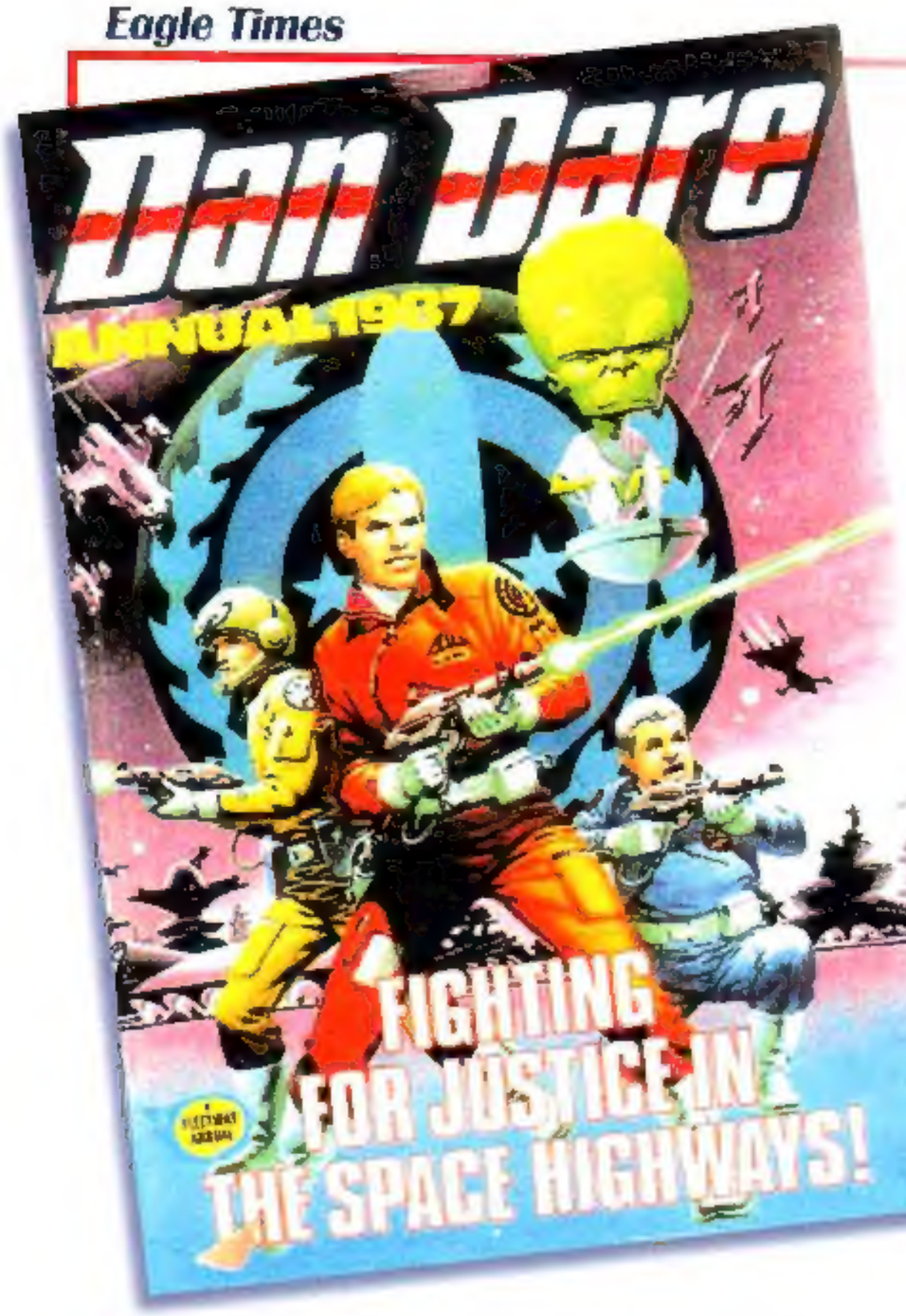
Some merchandising news. Two new Dick Barton CDs were out in November: Dick Barton and the Smash and Grab Raiders and Dick Barton and The Tibetan Adventure and Fantom Films are putting Charles Chilton's autobiography into paperback next February.



Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year

'The Team'





Working with David Hunt

Part 2

by Alan Vince

In 1986 Dave Hunt asked me to come up with ideas for a 1987 *Dan Dare Annual*. The contents had to be varied and include some puzzle pictures, possibly a crossword and so on. I set to work and typed up two or three pages of ideas and suggestions. I sent them off to Dave and he quickly got back to me, picking out ten features that he wanted me to go ahead with: a light-hearted 'Dan Dare Astral Report' (based on one of my own school reports), a 'This Is Your Life' piece on Dan (sadly based on the, then, 1940s fighter pilot), 'The Treen Dynasty and the Making of the Mekon', 'Dan by Digby', a full colour tribute to Dan Dare's artists over nine pages, a 'Dan Dare A-Z', a 'Spot the Difference' puzzle picture, (based on an Ian Kennedy drawing), a 'Dan Dare Crossword', a look at Space Fleet H.Q. - and I even put in a Spaceman's Shanty, nicked from the 1953 *Dan Dare Spacebook*. I would later nick two other features from that book. My one worry was how many readers would know the *Lincolnshire Poachers* song? I had one embarrassing moment when I delivered all the material to Dave Hunt: he asked me to point out ten changes in the spot the difference pictures. I proudly said I could, and managed to find only nine! I quickly had a look through my notes to find the tenth.

Quite out of the blue (there's a good link) Dave Hunt was contacted by a Mike Wallis who informed him that they still had the Slingsby Eagle T.42 Sailplane, built in 1954 and adopted by *EAGLE* to fly under its name and colours. Dave had found an old copy of *EAGLE* from July 1954 in which the paper's Special Investigator Macdonald Hastings had written about the Sailplane. Mr Wallis had suggested it would be a good idea to renew the craft's link with the present-day *Eagle*. Dave asked if I could write a piece for the 1988 *Holiday Special*. One thing, though, I had to write it in the name of "Ernie", who was a cartoon bird and mascot of *Eagle*. So true to form I got into the part and, like the great method actor I am, lived on bird seed and bread crumbs for days – I even got attacked by cats. When Dave asked were the scratches from a jealous girlfriend I had to say no, from a four-legged tabby! But it made a change from science-fiction.

It was around this time, in the latter part of the 1980s, that Dave Hunt and his staff moved from the lofty King's Reach Tower to more humble offices at Irwin House in Southwark Street. This was Monday, 10th March, 1986 and I remember calling in on him there just after we had the sad news of Ron Embleton's passing. I used to free-lance for another company in Southwark Street and it was only a short walk to Dave's office and somehow it helped to talk about Ron. For a time Dave was editing a football comic called *Gary Lineker's Hot-Shot* and I tried to do a few features for this, with little co-operation from the players and managers. But I did have a small input into the 1999 *Eagle Annual* in the shape of a 'Dan Dare Alien History Lesson' and even supplied a line and wash illustration of the Red Moon "Space Bees".

While Dave was working at Irwin House, Fleetway were taken over in July 1987 by Robert Maxwell's publishing arm and were soon moved to new offices at Greater London House, close to Mornington Crescent underground station. It was in 1988 that that a number of changes happened and most of them for the good. Dave officially left Fleetway to go freelance but still worked for them, both from home and in the office. There were also, in the following year of 1989, serious moves to bring back the original 'Dan Dare' and this took a number of forms. For a long time I had championed Keith Watson as a 'Dan Dare' artist on the new *Eagle*. Dave asked me if he would be interested and I assured him he would be. I had spoken to Keith and he longed for a chance not only to draw Dare but to write it as well. He later confessed to me that if Fleetway had said "OK Mr Watson – it's all yours, show us what you can do," he might well have doubted his bravado! Which reminds me of

Keith's own words back in the sixties with reference to his solo career on Dare: "They gave me a job which couldn't be done, and they laughed as I sat down to do it. But I tackled the job that couldn't be done and I couldn't bloody well do it!"

In the life of the new *Eagle* a number of artists took on the strip. Some were very good: Gerry Embleton, Ian Kennedy and John Burns. David Pugh was OK, but I used to point out to Dave Hunt where he went wrong on certain details. On the other hand, I felt, Oliver Frey and Keith Page were less able to illustrate Dare. As one staff member observed to me, with a sigh, "In a perfect world Dan Dare would deserve better."

"Quality has returned to Dan Dare," was Dave Hunt's remark when I called him after he had just received Keith's first pages. The new story, written by Tom Tully, gave Keith the chance to draw not only Dan, Digby and Sir Hubert but revive memories of 'Operation Saturn' with his spaceships based on the *Valiant* and *Nautilus* from that story.

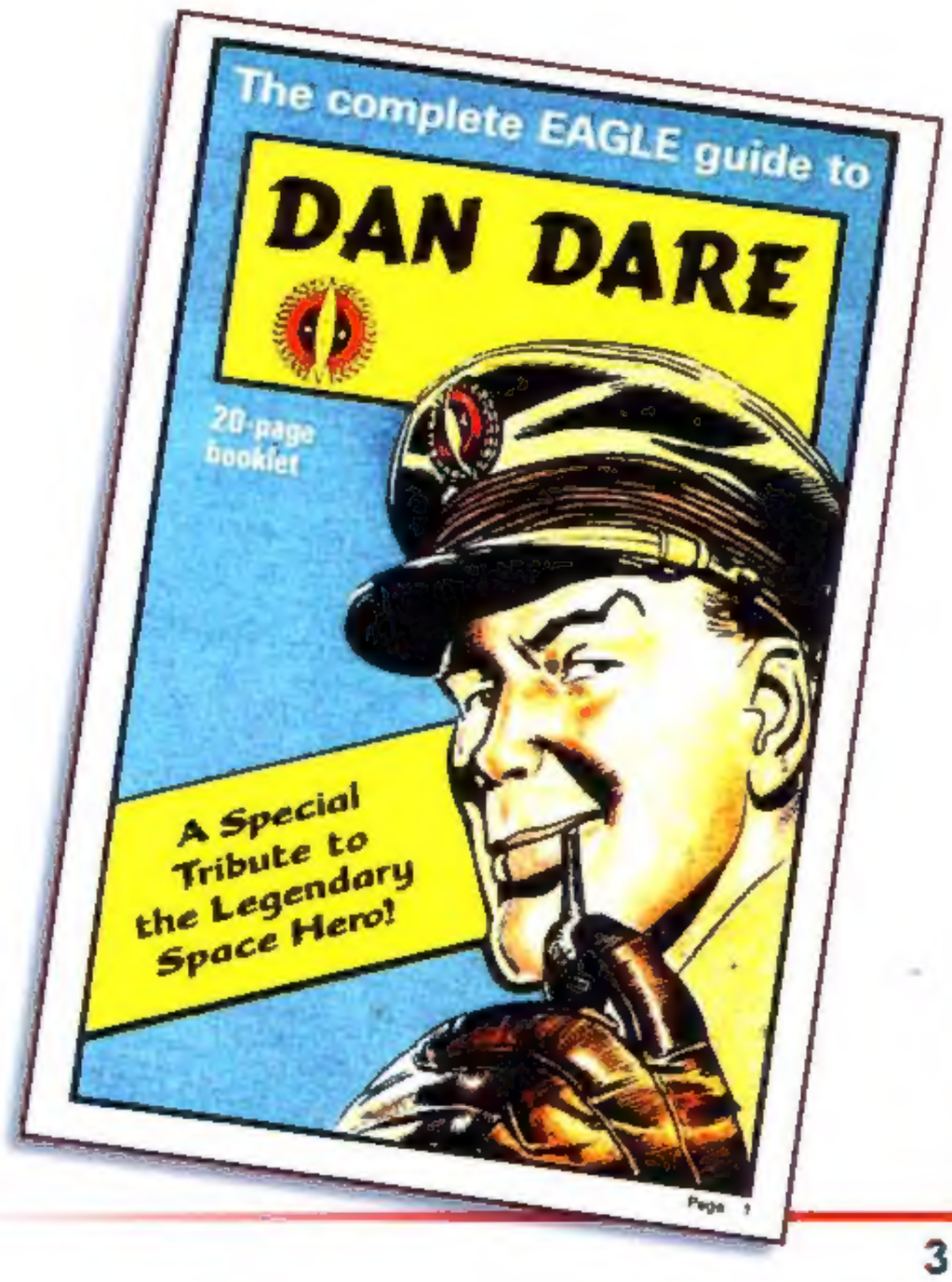
I was busy prior to this preparing a twenty page booklet that was to be part of the re-launch of Dare in *Eagle*. Dave put me in complete control of the booklet with regard to design, copy and content - and I insisted on a tribute to Frank Hampson. The pages were included for five weeks from 26th August to 23rd September, 1989 and Keith's, now-famous head of Dan Dare was used on the cover of *Eagle*.

Jon Davidge, who was the overall "man in charge" of the Fleetway titles, made sure that Keith's original of Dan Dare's head ended up, framed, in his office and Keith never got it back! He did, however (thanks to the efforts of myself, Dave Hunt and Gil Page), get back at least some of his artwork. Jon Davidge also once told me that it wasn't so much what the readers wanted that dictated the content of *Eagle*. While *Eagle* was part of the Maxwell Group I was introduced to a lively young man called Peter Acton, who was in charge of PR, and this led to my involvement in a number of promotions with 'Dan Dare' and two Gerry Anderson-related titles. Dave Hunt and I were also interviewed for a TV programme about the launch of Keith Watson's strip. There was added pleasure to this as the interviewer was a very attractive young lady!

The years 1990, 1991, and 1992 were quite memorable for me. I was asked by David Hunt to produce all the features for a 1990 *Dan Dare Holiday Special*, with Keith drawing the cover. As before, I sent Dave a list of suggestions and we later narrowed them down to twelve definite features. I was to be responsible for copy, layout, all

Keith's Dan on the cover of the new Eagle

headings and paste-up. The contents included a 'Meet Dan Dare' feature, a 'Science Fiction/Science Fact' page, a detailed 'History of the Mekon of Mekonta', 'Real Heroes' - featuring Willie the dog, Flamer and Stripey, 'Dan in Disguise', 'Spot the Silhouette', a text version of 'Digby the Guinea Pig' (from the 1953 *Spacebook*), 'The Fantastic Cities', 'Bases and Landscapes of Dan Dare', 'The Future Worlds of Martin Bower', 'How Frank Hampson Worked', yet another 'Dan Dare Crossword' and 'Creatures from Other



Worlds'. I was in complete control of all the illustrations and even had to draw Hank and The Mekon! Tom Tully remarked that he thought Keith's Dan, on the cover, looked like Danny La Rue, but he also remarked that Frank Bellamy "could have done better on his 'Heros the Spartan' " – so what does he know?

While I was fairly happy with the *Holiday Special*, I wrote to Barrie Tomlinson and suggested that the strips could have been better. As the bulk of the magazine was devoted to Frank Hampson's original creation, two of the strips just didn't, in my view, reflect the true nature of 'Dan Dare'. I think I may have used the words "take a little more trouble", as I had offered to supply original Hampson references for the Mekon, Treens and so on. Barrie's reaction to my letter was quite hostile. He accused me of being a know-all and living under the impression that I, alone, knew what 'Dan Dare' was all about. He made it clear that he was quite capable of promoting 'Dare' and knew what the readers of *Eagle* wanted. I was so stunned by his response that I suggested to Dave Hunt that I retire from helping with any future projects as I had obviously upset Barrie Tomlinson. Dave was the voice of reason and told me that I dealt with him, not Barrie, and he saw no reason to end our relationship.

Happily Barrie Tomlinson and I patched up our differences and I was asked to produce a two-page, full-colour feature for *Eagle* celebrating forty years of the famous title. Entitled '*Eagle* – 40 Years On', it took the shape of a two-page spread, featuring all the famous strips and features from the 1950s *EAGLE* and, again, I did all the artwork. Next up was a 20-page fact file which I had to write and for which Keith Watson supplied 38 individual drawings. The 20-page, clip-board presentation also included colour prints of Frank Hampson's two murals, a black and white picture of the latest 'Dan Dare' to appear in *Eagle* and some colour variations of the 'Dan Dare' title panel based on the original used in the fifties. The text contained a history of the strip, profiles of Dan Dare and Space Fleet and a listing of all the stories from 1950 to 1967. Fleetway intended to use this fact file, but only 20 were produced, along with photos of my Martin Bower models to promote merchandise; but nothing seemed to appear - despite all our efforts. At least Keith got all his artwork back.

My last 'Dan Dare' work for Fleetway was the 1991 *Dan Dare Annual*. As in the past I sent Dave Hunt a list of suggestions and he narrowed them down to eleven, all of which I wrote, supplied headings for, all the illustrations and finished page make-up. This book had cover art by David Pugh – he got Digby's proportions all wrong – an opening strip by Don Harley, and a 'Dan Dare Hall of Fame' in which I gave full colour profiles of just about all the main characters, good and bad. There was another 'Spot the Difference' picture quiz where I used a frame from 'The Man from Nowhere', and a tribute to Keith Watson – Dan Dare Artist Supreme! Keith telephoned me after he saw the piece and offered me the job of his PR man. I used Captain George Bryan to introduce a four-page feature on 'Tight Corners'. 'Stars in their Eyes' was something Dave Hunt was keen to use as it spot-lighted some famous 'Dan Dare' fans from the world of show business. Thanks to my connections I was able to get quotes from Tim Rice, Martin Bower, Des Lyneham, Peter Davidson, Michael Palin and Terry Jones. And yes, *another* crossword (by now I was running out of clues!). There was a reprint of an old Eric Eden strip called 'Funfair of Death' and a 'Guess Who?' puzzle page where I used parts of the faces of Dare characters and asked readers to identify them... I wonder if they ever bothered? 'Inside Space Fleet HQ' was similar to an earlier version but this was pure Hampson 'Dan Dare'. I nicked the 'Race to Mars' two-page game from the 1953 *Spacebook*, updated it to 'Journey to Cryptos' and had great fun adding all the perils of flight. Dave Hunt did query one or two parts of this (it was supposed to be played with a dice) but I assured him it would work.

A nice meaty feature was called (another "nicked" title) 'Dan Dare Got There First'! I filled eight pages with examples of how Frank Hampson's famous strip foretold the future, long before it happened. Lastly we included Frank's two murals as a tribute to his creation and all the pleasure it had given over the years. It was a fitting end to my 'Dan Dare'/*Eagle* work with Dave Hunt and I enjoyed every minute of it.

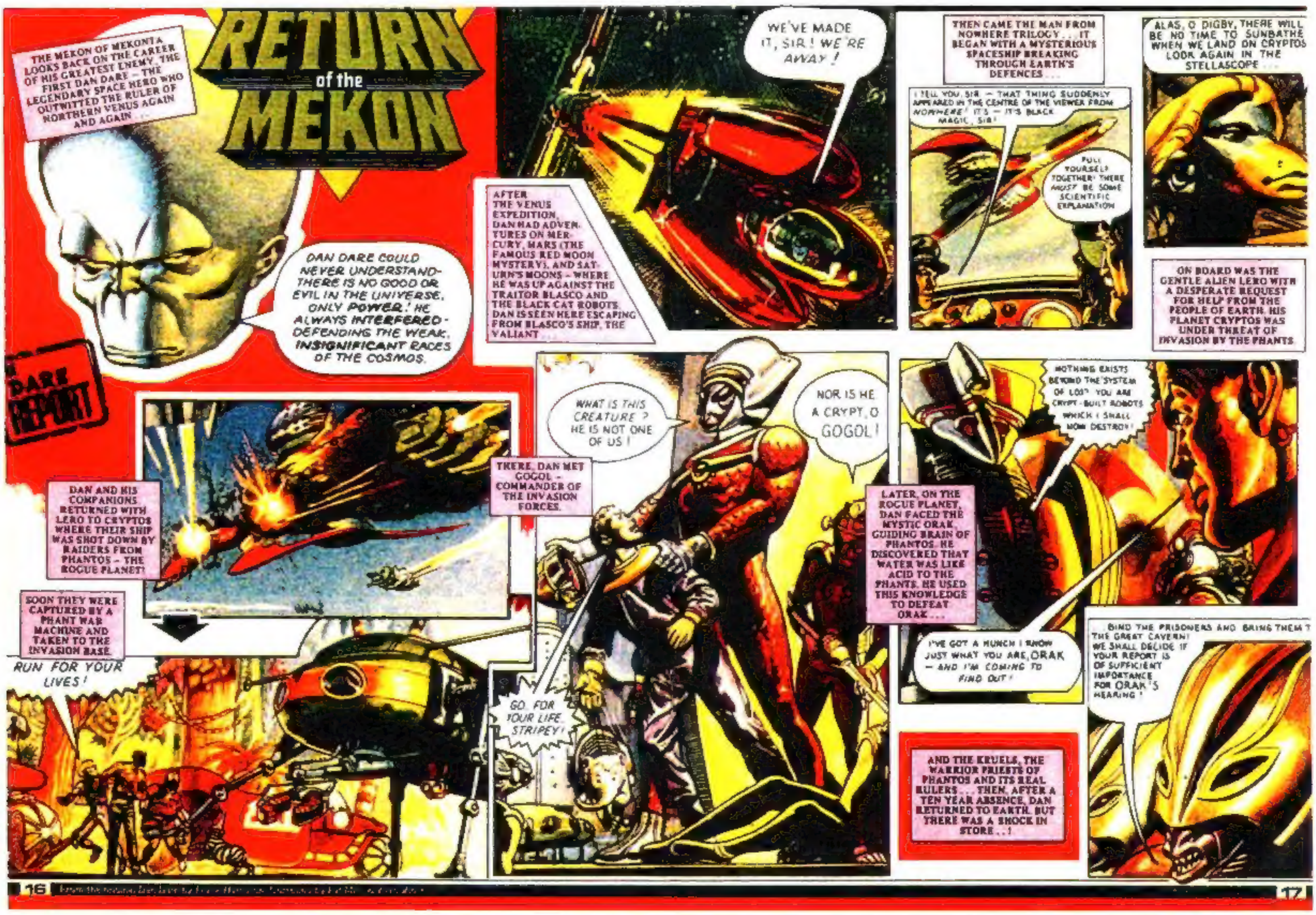
At the time Dave Hunt was closely involved with the re-launch of the original 'Dan Dare', his local paper ran an article on him – you know the sort of thing: "Local man invents the wheel" ... "local man discovers a cure for the common cold". It was a good piece but for two errors – Frank Hampson became Frank Hampsten and Fleetway had become Fleetway Publications! Oh well, I know only too well how local journalists get their facts wrong!

While not directly involving Dave Hunt I did get "recruited" by Peter Acton to help with four promotions for Fleetway. In 1990 we had the 'Dan Dare' launch at the Science Museum with special guests Don, Greta and Keith. The Zenith TV series(?) "promo" in a Park Lane Hotel and the two Gerry Anderson titles re-launched by Fleetway and Alan Fennel. The latter took the shape of, in 1991, a

Thunderbirds Comic launch at the Ambassador's Theatre in London's West End. Present that day were Nancy Bellamy, Keith Watson and Martin Bower. This happened in October, 1991 and the following October, in 1992, we all gathered in London again for the launch of a *Stingray Comic* - this time on the *R.S. Hispaniola*, moored off the Embankment near Charing Cross. This brought back memories of the *Ally Sloper* "do" in 1976. Peter Acton usually got me to handle the Press releases and invite cards and with the Stingray promotion I had to get there early to help set up the displays. To my surprise Gerry Anderson was also there and we exchanged greetings, as old friends do, but he left before the main proceedings began. Alan Fennel, I found, was rather reserved.

A Danish company called Egmont took over Fleetway in the early 1990s and everyone moved to a new address in Tavistock Place in 1993. Dave Hunt, a firm and devoted West Ham United fan, became editor of *Roy of the Rovers* while Barrie Tomlinson took over *Eagle Monthly*. I still did the odd colouring job for Dave on *Roy of the Rovers* and he tried, in vain, to get the new owners to produce a Millenium book on 'Dan Dare'. They went ahead with one for Roy, but not Dan – despite both Dave's and my efforts. In 1994 Dave had a "leaving bash" but didn't officially retire from Fleetway until 2001.

We still kept in touch and I have fond memories of our work together. It wasn't always to do with the 'Dan Dare' I fondly remember but, now and then, we did revive the true spirit of that famous *Pilot of the Future*. ❑


RETURN of the MEKON
THE MEKON OF MEKONTA LOOKS BACK ON THE CAREER OF HIS GREATEST ENEMY, THE FIRST DAN DARE – THE LEGENDARY SPACE HERO WHO OUTWITTED THE RULER OF NORTHERN VENUS AGAIN AND AGAIN . . .
DAN DARE COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND – THERE IS NO GOOD OR EVIL IN THE UNIVERSE, ONLY POWER! HE ALWAYS INTERFERED – DEFENDING THE WEAK, INSIGNIFICANT RACES OF THE COSMOS.
DARE REPORT
DAN AND HIS COMPANIONS RETURNED WITH LERO TO CRYPTOS WHERE THEIR SHIP WAS SHOT DOWN BY RAIDERS FROM PHANTOS – THE ROGUE PLANET!
SOON THEY WERE CAPTURED BY A PHANT WAR MACHINE AND TAKEN TO THE INVASION BASE.
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
WE'VE MADE IT, SIR! WE'RE AWAY!
AFTER THE VENUS EXPEDITION, DAN HAD ADVENTURES ON MERCURY, MARS (THE FAMOUS RED MOON MYSTERY), AND SATURN'S MOONS – WHERE HE WAS UP AGAINST THE TRAITOR BLASCO AND THE BLACK CAT ROBOTS. DAN IS SEEN HERE ESCAPING FROM BLASCO'S SHIP, THE VALIANT . . .
THERE, DAN MET GOGOL – COMMANDER OF THE INVASION FORCES.
WHAT IS THIS CREATURE? HE IS NOT ONE OF US!
NOR IS HE A CRYPT, O GOGOL!
GO FOR YOUR LIFE, STRIPEY!
THEN CAME THE MAN FROM NOWHERE TRILOGY . . . IT BEGAN WITH A MYSTERIOUS SPACESHIP BREAKING THROUGH EARTH'S DEFENCES . . .
I TELL YOU, SIR – THAT THING SUDDENLY APPEARED IN THE CENTRE OF THE VIEWER FROM NOWHERE! IT'S – IT'S BLACK MAGIC, SIR!
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER! THERE MUST BE SOME SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION
ALAS, O DIGBY, THERE WILL BE NO TIME TO SUNBATHE WHEN WE LAND ON CRYPTOS LOOK AGAIN IN THE STELLASCOPE . . .
ON BOARD WAS THE GENTLE ALIEN LERO WITH A DESPERATE REQUEST FOR HELP FROM THE PEOPLE OF EARTH. HIS PLANET CRYPTOS WAS UNDER THREAT OF INVASION BY THE PHANTS
NOTHING EXISTS BEYOND THE SYSTEM OF LOS? YOU ARE CRYPT-BUILT ROBOTS WHICH I SHALL NOW DESTROY!
LATER, ON THE ROGUE PLANET, DAN FACED THE MYSTIC ORAK, GUIDING BRAIN OF PHANTOS. HE DISCOVERED THAT WATER WAS LIKE ACID TO THE PHANTS. HE USED THIS KNOWLEDGE TO DEFEAT ORAK . . .
I'VE GOT A HUNCH I KNOW JUST WHAT YOU ARE, ORAK – AND I'M COMING TO FIND OUT!
BIND THE PRISONERS AND BRING THEM TO THE GREAT CAVERN! WE SHALL DECIDE IF YOUR REPORT IS OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE FOR ORAK'S HEARING!
AND THE KRUELS, THE WARRIOR PRIESTS OF PHANTOS AND ITS REAL RULERS . . . THEN, AFTER A TEN YEAR ABSENCE, DAN RETURNED TO EARTH. BUT THERE WAS A SHOCK IN STORE . . !
16
17

PC 49 and the Case of the

Frightened Flower Girl

by Alan Stranks

Part 2

Adapted for *Eagle Times* by Keith Howard

The story so far: *Archie buys a rose from a flower girl on the street, and gives it to Joan, but the flower girl snatches the rose back and runs off. Later Archie and Joan stumble over a body in a dark alley but, as it is in C Division territory, they tell the beat policeman. Later Archie tells Wilson of some white powder Joan found in the tinfoil around the rose. This turns out to be potassium cyanide, the substance that killed the body in the alley. Archie is told to leave the case to C Division.*

Later Stella, who doubles as the flower girl, tells her partner, Sandor, that she will not sell flowers with drugs in, anymore. Sandor then tells her about doing away with competitors in the drug business.

"They have cigarette girls in three night clubs working in the same way. They've been getting at my supplier, too. I'm very low on the white stuff. It's serious. I've got to get some more from somewhere – and soon."

Stella nervously lit a cigarette. "But if they had their own supplies why did Drew keep buying from me? Panton came to me, too."

Sandor waved away her cigarette smoke with a fastidious hand gesture. "Obviously, they had to divert suspicion away from themselves. But they couldn't fool me."

"So you did murder Drew."

"We, Stella," Sandor smiled. "You and I."

"I didn't know anything about it!" Stella vehemently protested.

"You know now," Sandor firmly told her. "Tell me – Panton buys from you every day?"

"He comes just after four."

A bland smile creased across Sandor's urbane features. "Good. This rose is for him," he added, picking up a tinfoil-wrapped bloom from the coffee table. "And make sure he gets it this afternoon."

"Is it…?"

"Yes it is."

Stella leapt to her feet. "I won't do it!"

Sandor's eyes fixed her frightened ones with a deadly cold stare.

"Stella my dear, in the three years you have known me certain unpleasant things have happened to a number of people who failed to carry out my orders."

Stella shrank back on the divan, her face bloodless. "You wouldn't dare…"

"I think you know I would. Now, get out on your job and see that Panton gets his rose today."

* * * * * * *

Stella was at her old pitch of the previous evening, once again the drab little flower girl. "Roses! Lovely roses – all fresh picked this morning!"

A man's shadow fell across her. "Hello, Stella. Got a nice rose for me – a red one?"

Stella looked up at the sharply dressed man. "Yes, Mr. Panton – fresh out." She handed him a particular rose.

"Thanks – keep the change. Wish you wouldn't put this tinfoil on – spoils the shape of my lapel." He fumbled with the foil wrapping.

"Panton, don't be a fool!" Stella hissed. "Don't take that stuff here! Panton!"

But Panton had unwrapped the tinfoil. "Shut up!" he growled. "I need it. I've just heard about Diamond."

"Stop, Panton," Stella desperately pleaded. "Please - take it somewhere else. You'll get me into trouble. No… No…!"

But she was too late. Panton had quickly tipped the contents of the foil into his mouth and swallowed it. Almost at once the convulsions hit him. "You… you …" he gasped. "You've done for me, you rotten little… I'll fix you…"

Even as he began to crumble to the ground Panton managed to claw a revolver from his jacket. His hand shook but firing again and again at Stella at point-blank range he couldn't miss. Then he collapsed in a sprawled heap, dead.

Passers-by, shocked out of their own mundane thoughts and problems, gathered in a confused crowd around the two bodies. One of the passers-by pushed through the press. It was Joan. "Stella!" she called out, kneeling down beside the bloodstained figure. "Stella Webb… oh, you poor kid."

"He… shot… me… I…" Stella whispered.

Joan gently put an arm under her shoulders. "Can you lift your head a little? There. Now try and lie still."

Stella looked up at her with glazed eyes. "Who are you?" Her voice was little more than a dry croak. "You called me Stella."

"Yes. I've been looking for you all afternoon."

"Here, what's this? Stand back there. Move on – keep moving."

The voices belonged to two policemen. One of them knelt down beside Joan and stared, white faced, at the shot woman. "Blimey! Hey, Bob," he called over his shoulder to the other policeman. " Squad car and ambulance, quick! Looks like these two have had it. The fellow's gone already."

The other policeman nodded briefly and urged the crowd of onlookers to move on.

"He made me do it," murmured Stella in a weak voice. "I didn't want to sell the rotten stuff. He made me do it."

"Who made you?" asked Joan.

The first policeman looked questioningly at her. "How is she, Miss?"

Joan shook her head. "Pretty bad," she replied in a choked voice. "We mustn't move her until the ambulance comes. Can't you get these people to stand back?"

"Come on there!" snapped the policeman to the remaining onlookers who were still hovering morbidly at the scene. "Move on! Stand back. You're holding up the traffic. Get along there."

"It was Sandor who made me do it," Stella whispered in Joan's ear. "He's a devil."

"Sandor? Who's he?" prompted Joan.

"He runs the Plush Room. I was all right until I got mixed up with him."

"Sandor," Joan mused thoughtfully. "The Plush Room…"

* * * * *

Later, back at her flat, Joan told Archie about the dramatic events of that afternoon. "But she did tell me his name, Archie…Sandor. He runs the Plush Room."

"That's a Bottle Party, isn't it?" Archie replied. "Did you tell the police all this?"

"No, I thought I'd save it for you."

Archie nearly burst a blood vessel. "You what?"

"I only wanted to help."

"Ha ha!" Archie's laughter had all the hollowness of an open grave. "She only wanted to help."

"But Archie – "

"Now we'll have to go and tell Inspector Wilson everything," Archie groaned. "He'll have to pass this delayed information on to Roper in C Division. Roper'll tear off another strip, and Wilson'll take it out on me. Oh well," he sighed, standing up. "Come on, over the top."

Joan placed a restraining hand on his arm. "Wait, Archie. You're off duty until early turn tomorrow. A couple of hours can't make that much difference. Let's go to the Plush Room. I'd like to have a look at this Sandor."

"Me!" Archie looked affronted. "in one of those upholstered sewers? Not likely! Besides, I'm broke."

"I've got some money. I'll pay."

Archie was adamant. "It's sheer madness." I'm going straight to Inspector Wilson."

"Please Archie. It's only in Lemon Street."

"How is she, Miss?" asked the policeman.

"Pretty bad" replied Joan

"I know but –" Archie did a double-take. "Where?"

"Lemon Street."

"But that's in C Division. No!"

"But Archie – "

Her boyfriend only shook his head. "Joan, I'll tell you once and for all, wild horses won't drag me to the Plush Room. Definitely, finally and absolutely – I won't go!"

* * * * * * *

Sandor seemed to materialise at Archie and Joan's table like a genie out of a lamp. "Welcome to the Plush Room," he purred. "Everything satisfactory, I trust?"

"With Scotch at seven quid a bottle?" Archie grumbled. "Wonderful."

Joan tried to hush him and smiled sweetly at their host. "Yes, thanks, Mr. Sandor. We are having a heavenly time. You are Mr. Sandor aren't you?"

Sandor inclined his sleek head. "I am."

"Then I must compliment you on your club."

"It's a pleasure to please such charming patrons," Sandor replied with an oily smile.

"Thank you very much."

Sandor backed away, rubbing his hands together. "It's a pleasure."

"Lord! what a swine!" Archie muttered in disgust. "A horrible, greasy swine. I wish this were our division. I'd grab him right now – and chance the consequences."

"Well, go on then."

"Eh?" Archie glanced at Joan in astonishment.

"Get him into your division and arrest him."

"What are you talking about?" hissed Archie in exasperation. "I'm a copper not a magician."

"I'll tell you how to do it," Joan continued, ignoring her fiancé's sceptical eye-rolling. "Listen. You've got the key to Dr. Bellamy's house, haven't you?"

"Yes," Archie admitted, still not understanding. "He's away for the weekend. But what – ?"

"Don't interrupt – just listen. Now the first thing you've got to do is this…"

* * * * * * *

In his office over the club Sandor acknowledged the knock on the door and smiled at his visitor. "You wanted to see me? Oh, you're the young man who thinks my whisky is too expensive. What can I do for you? You can talk quite freely. This is my private office."

"I've got a parcel of snow to sell – " Archie began, but Sandor cut him short.

"Snow? I don't understand you. What would I want with snow?"

Archie grinned tightly. "Come off it, Sandor. You know what I'm talking about – cocaine. I'm a seafaring man. Never mind what line or ship – that doesn't matter. What does matter is that I have smuggled in ten pounds dead weight of pure cocaine powder. I was going to do business with a fellow called Diamond Drew, but he's on a slab in the mortuary, so I'm landed with the stuff."

Sandor's eyes narrowed suspiciously. "What makes you think I would be interested in buying cocaine? I run a nightclub. The police are my friends."

"Well, they're not my friends," Archie retorted, "and I want to be rid of this parcel." He began to turn away toward the door. "It's going cheap, Sandor. Oh well, but if you don't want it, I'll find somebody that does."

"Wait a minute," Sandor checked him. "Come back and close that door. Where have you got the stuff?"

"Over at a place in North West London."

"Bring it here. Then we'll talk business."

"Nothing doing," Archie retorted. "You come and get it – and bring the dough. Two thousand quid and that's dirt cheap."

Sandor considered for a few seconds. "Unusual method you have, young man. Still, ten pounds in weight you said."

"And the price is two thousand."

"Fifteen hundred," snapped Sandor. "That's my last word."

Archie forced a scowl onto his face. It wasn't difficult. "They told me you were hard. All right - I can't argue. It's a deal! And if you're thinking of bringing any of those strong-arm mugs of yours along, forget it. We'll go alone. And the sooner the better."

"What about the girl downstairs?"

Archie shrugged off-handedly. "A pick-up. Never met her in my life ."

"Go back to your table," Sandor instructed him. "I'll think it over. If the answer's yes, you'll see me in ten minutes at the top of the stairs. Just follow me out to my car."

Archie nodded as he opened the door. "You're getting a bargain, Sandor, a smashing bargain."

For several seconds Sandor stared at the closed door. "I wonder," he mused, pressing the button on his

desk. In response to the buzzer, a door the far side of the office opened and two heavily built men in dark suits appeared.

"Did you hear what he said, Buggsy?"

"I got it," Buggsy replied.

"And you, Skinner?"

"Yeah," responded the second man. "And if you ask me, it's a plant."

"I don't think so," Sandor murmured thoughtfully, "but we shall see. I'll take the limousine – you tail us in the coupé, Buggsy. I'll go into the house with him alone. If I'm not out in five minutes, come and get me. And you, Skinner, as soon as we've gone, go down and get that girl. Bring her up here and keep her here until we get back. Somehow I don't think anything will happen to me while we've got the girl."

"But he said she was just a pick-up," Skinner objected.

Sandor smiled. "He said... but when a man looks at a girl the way he was looking at her, he'd go a long way to keep her out of bother."

* * * * * *

"How did it go, Archie? "asked Joan as he joined her at the table.

Archie winked. "He played foxy at first but he fell for it all right."

"What do we do now?"

Archie kept his voice low. "In a few seconds he'll beckon me from the top of those stairs. I'll take him to Bellamy's house and arrest him."

"That's the stuff, Archie. Inspector Wilson'll be proud of you."

But Archie wasn't so sure. "I wonder. I'm poaching on Inspector Roper's preserves. He and Wilson are at loggerheads and the whole story's bound to come out sooner or later."

Joan patted him on his arm. "Never mind. By then you'll have Sandor in the bag and they can't say much to you."

"Can't they! I'd love to believe that!"

Joan glanced up. "Archie, there's Sandor now! He's calling you."

Archie quickly rose from his chair. "Good! Stick here till I'm well away, then hare out to the nearest public phone box and ring Wilson. Give him the gen and tell him to go round to Bellamy's house as soon as possible. I'll hold Sandor until he comes."

Joan grasped his hand. "Trust me. Good luck, darling."

"I'll need it," Archie murmured. "This swine's sure to carry a gun!" Then he was gone, after Sandor.

"A gun!" Shock etched itself on Joan's face. "Oh, I never thought of that! Archie" she called out. "Come back, Archie."

* * * * * * *

At Archie's direction Sandor's car drew to a halt in a select neighbourhood of detached houses, just visible in the twilight.

"Right," Sandor instructed. "You get out and lead the way. And remember I'm close behind you - with a gun."

"Accustomed to having your own way, aren't you, Sandor," was the policeman's caustic comment as he got out of the car.

"Go ahead!" Sandor snapped, "and keep your hands out of your pockets!"

"How did it go?" asked Joan. *"He fell for it," was the reply.*

Archie led the way to the front path of Dr. Bellamy's house. "This is a fine way to do a bit of friendly business," he remarked as he opened the front door and stood inside. "Here we are. After you, Mr. Sandor."

"Don't be comic!" snarled Sandor. "Get inside and let's have some light."

Archie obediently switched on the hall light. Sandor's eyes took in the tasteful décor and furnishings of his surroundings. "Just a minute. A merchant seaman doesn't live in a place like this."

But Archie was ready for this one. "It's all right; the owner's away. My pal's the caretaker."

"Where is he?"

"Out at the local boozer. Don't worry. There's no one here but you and me." Archie led the way to the nearest room, which happened to be the library. "The stuff's in the library," he said, switching on the light. "Come on in."

Sandor peered around the room suspiciously. "I don't like this. I warn you, if this is a trap…"

"Give your nerves a rest, Sandor," Archie chuckled. He picked up a large vase from a nearby table. "I've got the dope planted in this big vase. Let's get the deal over."

"Very well. Let me have that vase."

"It's all yours, chum!" And with that, Archie seized the vase by its neck like a club and shattered it on Sandor's head!

Unconscious, the gun flying from his hand, Sandor crumpled to the floor. "Too slow on the trigger, Mr. Sandor," commented Archie.

"Now to phone the Inspector," he said to himself as he darted into the hall, seized the phone and dialled the Inspector's number, humming happily to himself while he waited to be connected.

"Come on! Answer, you lazy devils – oh! No, not you Inspector. PC Fortynine reporting, Inspector, from Dr. Bellamy's house. I've taken the prisoner, Sandor, into custody, sir … SANDOR! The one Joan phoned you about, sir. Joan Carr, sir, my fiancée… she hasn't? But she must have phoned you, sir. I told her to…suffering catfish! She must be in trouble … no , sorry – I can't explain now – I've got to find Joan." Archie replaced the receiver, his heart thumping wildly.

"Good grief!" he muttered. "Something's gone wrong!"

"You bet it has, copper!" spoke up a new voice.

Fortynine turned to the front door. "Who's that?"

Buggsy stood there, gun in hand. "Just a guy with a gun, pal. Take it easy. Where's Sandor?"

"He's in the library," bluffed Archie, "but he's not reading."

Buggsy gestured with the gun. "Right. Lead the way – and no funny business."

Archie had no choice but to comply! "I shouldn't dream of it," he murmured as they entered the library where Sandor, hunched on the floor, was just coming to his senses.

"Sandor!" exclaimed Buggsy. "Blimey! You'll pay for this lot, copper. You all right, boss?"

Clutching his head, Sandor groggily clambered to his feet. "Give me a drink," he muttered.

"Here, you" Buggsy rapped out to Archie as he produced a hip flask from his pocket. "Give him a swig from this flask. Catch!"

Archie neatly caught the flask. "I hope it chokes him," he bitterly retorted.

Sandor clumsily snatched the flask from Archie's hand. "Give me that!" He slurred, unscrewing the top and taking a quick gulp. He shook his head to clear it and peered at Buggsy. "What happened?"

"This copper must have crowned you," Buggsy replied.

"Copper?"

"Yeah. I heard him phoning his Inspector. They're on to us!"

Sandor's scattered wits quickly returned. "What!"

Archie smiled faintly. "It's caught up with you at last, Sandor."

"Shut up you!" Buggsy savagely rounded on him. "What next, boss?" he asked.

Sandor glared at Fortynine. "We'll pay this one off here and now, then hop back to the Club, pick up Skinner and the bank-roll and vanish."

"What about the dame Skinner's holding?"

An ugly smile crossed Sandor's face. "This copper's girl? You can look after her as well."

Archie started forward. "Hey - wait a minute!"
"It'll be a pleasure!" Buggsy smirked. He shot a quick glance at Archie. "Keep away from that door, you."

Buggsy raised the gun in his hand. "Stand back against the wall, Copper, and take what's coming to you."

"A game chicken aren't you Buggsy," taunted Archie as he obeyed. "I wonder how you'd be without a gun – or on level terms – in the dark!"

Within a second Archie's hand had flicked off the light switch, plunging the room into pitch darkness.

"You fool, Buggsy," cursed Sandor.

"He flicked the switch up, Guv." Buggsy let off a couple of wild shots.

"Careful with that gun, you fool!" Sandor's voice bellowed out in the darkness. "You nearly got me!"

"Keep still, boss," Buggsy called back. "I'll fix him. Where are you?"

"I'm over by … " Sandor's voice suddenly choked. "Help! He's got me!"

The sound of a thump, a strangled moan and a bump as a body falling to the floor told Buggsy that the worst, as far as he was concerned, had happened. Panic seized him. "What's up, Sandor? Boss! where are you?"

But only Archie's laughter answered him. "You're on your own now, Buggsy. And I'm coming to get you!"

"Keep away!" screamed Buggsy, firing blindly into the darkness. "Keep off!"

"Don't like the dark, do you, Buggsy," Archie's voice sounded from another part of the room.

Buggsy was sweating with fear now. "You rotten copper! Where are you?"

"Right behind you,Buggsy," Archie's voice sounded in his ear.

Buggsy's scream was cut short as the blow he couldn't see coming put him out for the count.

"Got you!" breathed Archie, switching on the light. At that moment a distant hammering on the front door sounded. "Open up! What's going on in there? Open this door. We're police officers!"

Archie ran a hand over his brow. "Inspector Wilson and the Sarge ," he gasped, dashing into the hall.

At that moment the front door burst open and Archie collided with his two senior officers. Inspector Wilson took the full impact on his portly person and fell backwards heavily on the floor.

For a moment Archie hovered in the doorway.

"Sorry, sir – can't wait to help you up – I've got a date with my fiancée. You'll find the two prisoners in the library."

With that he dashed down the path towards Sandor's car. "I'll give you the facts later."

"Fortynine!" Wright shouted after him. "Come back here! Come back here I say…"

But Archie had flung himself into Sandor's car and was starting it up.

"I'll have him locked up for insubordination!" raved Wilson, struggling for breath as he tried to clamber to his feet. "I'll skin him alive! You confounded idiot!" he shouted as the car began to move off. "Where are you going?"

Wilson took the full impact!

"The Plush Room. Lemon Street, sir," Archie's voice floated back.

"Come back …you…!" bellowed the crimson-faced Wilson,but the car had already raced off, disappearing down the road.

Sergeant Wright stoically observed the obvious. "I'm afraid he's gone, sir."

Seeking another outlet for his wrath, Wilson turned to Wright. "Well, what d'you think you're doing? Help me up, can't you?"

* * * * * * *

Joan crouched back on the sofa in Sandor's office, glaring defiantly at the hulking figure before her. "You'll be sorry for this, you big ape.This is abduction! Let me out of this room."

"Just you sit still, my girl, or I'll slap you down, sure as my name's Skinner," the burly thug threatened.

"You'll grin on the other side of your ugly face when Archie gets back," Joan retaliated with spirit.

Skinner sneered. "Archie! There's a monicker. I bet he cleans his teeth and smells of violets!"

That second the door burst open. "Who's that?" was all that Skinner had a chance to say.

"A bunch of violets! Here! Smell 'em!" shouted Archie crashing his face and sending him reeling.

"Archie, darling!" Joan called out in frantic warning. " Look out - he's got a knife!"

The rest was lost in a chaos of shouts, screams and police whistles…

* * * * * * *

Wilson and Wright climbed out of the police car. "This is the Plush Room, Inspector." Wright indicated the garish, neon-lit façade and the outside iron stairway with a door at the top. "Through that side door to Sandor's office."

"Sounds like Fortynine's wrecking the place, sir," Sergeant Wright dryly observed.

"He's gone completely mad!" Wilson fumed. "Come on! Bring Sandor and the other one with you."

Wright ushered in the two handcuffed, bemused characters out of the police car. "Out you get, my beauties."

Wilson led the way up the narrow iron stairway. Without breaking his stride he flung open the door at the top. "Ah! There you are, Fortynine," he declared, his face beginning to redden again.

A somewhat dishevelled Archie managed a painful smile. "Yes sir! I've just been dealing with Skinner." He indicated a prone and battered figure. "That's him on the floor. I'd like to explain…"

But Wilson waved him to silence. "No need. Buggsy – or whatever his name is – squealed his head off in the hope of saving his hide. We've got Sandor just where we want him – hello, who's this?"

He was interrupted by the sound of footsteps racing up the stairway. "Don't move, anybody," commanded the newcomer. "Stand where you are! You're all under arrest!"

"What the deuce…oh." Quickly recovering himself Inspector Wilson blandly greeted the new arrival. "My dear friend Inspector Roper!"

Roper glared at Wilson in astonishment. "Wilson! What the blazes are you doing in my Division?"

"What are you doing?" countered Wilson. "Ah - I see! It's a raid."

"Yes – we get on with the job in this Division, Roper angrily returned. "We've had this place under observation for weeks. The building's surrounded. I've had the club packed stiff with my men all evening."

"Go on!" exclaimed Wilson in mock surprise. "How very clever!"

Roper shot Wilson a suspicious glance. "I'd still like to know what you're doing here. I'm looking for a man called Sandor. He runs this dive. I'm arresting him for breaking the liquor laws."

"Sandor, sir," interjected Archie. "I…"

"You shut up, Fortynine!" Wilson snapped ungraciously.

Sergeant Wright addressed himself to his chief. "What will I do with these prisoners, sir? There's a raid in progress downstairs."

Meanwhile, Roper was staring in disbelief at the two handcuffed men. "Sandor! Buggsy Mills!" he croaked.

"We'll take 'em over to divisional Headquarters and charge 'em," Wilson decided. "Our Divisional Headquarters."

"Wait a minute," growled Roper. "Wait a minute. This is my Division and these are my prisoners, thank you very much."

"Oh no." Inspector Wilson had begun to enjoy himself. "These birds belong to us. PC Fortynine here arrested them half an hour ago – single-handed – over the border in my territory. We're just taking them in." He failed to suppress a chuckle. "You can have Skinner for nothing."

Roper's face was beetroot red.

"Well I'll be…I'll settle you later, Wilson."

Wilson turned to the door. "Goodnight, Inspector Roper. I hope it keeps fine for your little raid."

Joan, who had stayed in the background, could contain herself no longer and flung her arms around Archie's neck. "Darling!" she cried. "My hero!"

"Am I really, Joan?" murmured Archie, his moustache twitching as he grinned fatuously.

"Constable – 'darling'! Hey you!" barked Wilson. "Take charge of your prisoners!"

Archie dropped Joan as if she were red-hot. "Yes sir! Certainly, sir! At once, sir!"

Wilson turned a basilisk eye on him. " And if you must kiss that girl…"

"Yes, sir?"

There was a hint of a twinkle in Inspector Wilson's eye. "Do it in your own division!"

"Yes, sir!" Archie and Joan replied as one. ❑

The Rivals of Eagle

Boy's Own Paper

by Harold Harpole

THE
BOY'S OWN PAPER

No. 1.—Vol. I. SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1879. Price One Penny.

MY FIRST FOOTBALL MATCH.

By an Old Boy.

It was a proud moment in my existence when Wright, captain of our football club, came up to me in school one Friday and said "Adams, your name is down to play in the match against Craven

I could have knighted him on the spot. To be one of the picked "fifteen," whose glory it was to fight the battles of their school in the Great Close, had been the leading ambition of my life—I suppose I ought to be ashamed to confess it—ever since, as a little chap of ten, I entered Parkhurst six years ago. Not a winter Saturday but had seen me either looking on at some big match, or offener still scrummaging about with a score or so of other juniors in a scratch game. But for a long time, do what I would, I always seemed as far as ever from the coveted goal, and was half despairing of ever rising to win my "first fifteen cap." Latterly, however, I had noticed Wright and a few others of our best players more than once lounging about in the Little Close where we juniors used to play, evidently taking observations with an eye to business. Under the awful gaze of these heroes, need I say I exerted myself as I had never done before? What cared I for backs or bruises, so only that I could distinguish myself in their eyes? And never was mortal sweeter

As a rival to *EAGLE*, *Boy's Own Paper* only took on "the bird" from 1950 to 1967. However, as a boys' paper it had one of the longest runs of any - eighty-eight years. Both papers had a similar start. *Boy's Own Paper* was launched to combat the penny dreadfuls; and *EAGLE*, the American horror comics. The Religious Tract Society launched *BOP* in 1879 and *EAGLE* was launched by a Church of England clergyman in 1950.

The Religious Tract Society's report in 1879 set out its reasons for publishing. "Juvenile crime was being largely stimulated by the pernicious literature circulated among our lads. Judges, magistrates, school masters, prison chaplains and others were deploring the existence of evil…"

Just as with *EAGLE*, the first issue was a sell-out, although it did take three days for *BOP* to sell out where it took *EAGLE* only 12 hours to do the same. *BOP's* first editor was G.A. Hutchinson who put a strong emphasis on fiction, although the Society wanted a more pious publication. He argued, just as Marcus Morris would do seventy years later, that good behaviour, honesty, industry and perseverance could be skilfully embedded into fictional stories. The price of the paper was one penny.

The first issue had the usual Victorian cover – a black and white illustration in the usual scratchy style, of a rugby match with the text, "By an Old Boy" in the middle. Other pages contained adventure stories and articles about hobbies, sport, nature and health, and a good deal of warfare stories. Indeed the war stories were very popular. These were about the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815), The Crimean War (1853-1856), The Indian Mutinies (1857) and, later on, the Boer War (1899-1902).

The paper had some famous writers to call on: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, R.M. Ballantyne, W.G. Grace, G.A. Henty and Robert Baden Powell, whose experience in the Boer War was very very well received, all contributed.

It was all "stiff upper lip stuff" although the *BOP* tended to look backwards where its main rival, *Union Jack*, launched in 1880, was more topical. The mix in *BOP* continued right up until the First World War broke out. Magazines about the war sprouted up quickly and in the summer of 1914 over twenty new publications were available. By now, the editor of *BOP* was Arthur Haydon who scrapped the weekly edition and the publication became a sixty-four page monthly selling at sixpence.

Much of the paper was dedicated to helping the war effort; although the school and sports stories carried on, some of these would now have a war connection.

The story 'How the War Came to Fountainbury' (August 1916) concerned a bunch of schoolboys who expose one of their teachers as a German spy.

Boys' Own Annuals (see the illustration, opposite) also told war stories and the stories had a colour illustration on the cover.

With the end of the war; *BOP* had to contend with stiff competition from D.C. Thomson, who launched *Rover* (March, 1922) and *Wizard* (September, 1922), and from Amalgamated Press with *The Champion*, but *Boy's Own Paper* held its share of the market.

Incidentally, another publication, *The Boys' Realm of Sports and Adventure* (1927) ran a story of an 18 year-old RAF recruit who wanted to be a boxing champion; his name? – DAN DARE!

During the Second World War, *BOP* did its bit to help keep the home fires burning and promote morale.

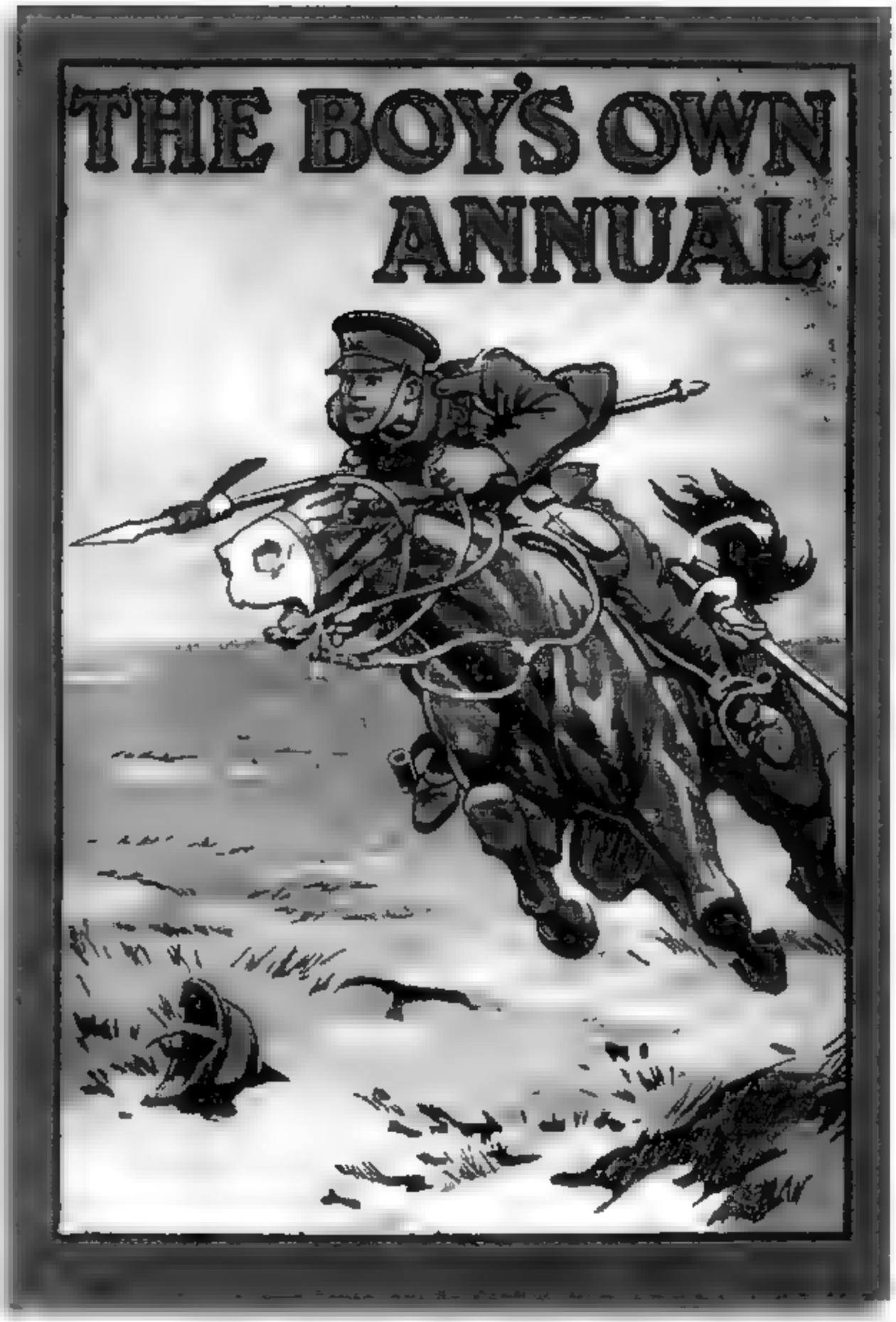
The 1938/39 annual contained an article 'Helping the A.R.P – jobs that you can do' and sadly, because of paper rationing, the annuals would then cease publication throughout the rest of the war.

During 1939 the paper was taken over by Lutterworth Press, who would publish it until 1963.

Raymond Sheppard, an artist who went on to work for *EAGLE*, illustrated a series called 'Dumb Heroes of the Battle'. This featured animals who had played their part in winning the war. The illustration (below) shows a terrier who was trained to warn of the approach of the enemy by tugging on a soldier's clothing rather than barking and giving away a position.

After the war, P.O.W. stories and "How we won the War" stories were published. In June, 1945 a piece called 'The Way We Came Through The War' was published and similar articles would follow.

Moving into the fifties, *BOP* had all



Boys Own Annual dated 1914/15

the competition of the "Golden Age" of comics. *EAGLE, Lion, Tiger, Express Weekly*, etc. were all running picture strip stories but the paper kept its nerve and carried on with text articles. The covers improved too. Sometimes we had a film tie-in. 1952 saw a coloured clip from the film *Pickwick Papers* on the cover, and the Disney film of *Robin Hood* with Richard Todd in the part also made a cover. *EAGLE* cut-away artists such as Hubert Redmill and Lawrence Dunn also drew covers, and sometimes photos of boys enjoying sports were used.

Several contributors to *BOP* also worked for *EAGLE*. These include Geoffrey Bond, George Bowe, Raymond Sheppard, Frank Bellamy and Alfred Mazure, as well as the aforementioned Redmill and Dunn. Other famous contributors were Arthur Askey, Hammond Innes, Len Hutton, Stanley Matthews, Patrick Moore and many more.

The paper was taken over by Purnell Publishing in 1963 and the magazine took on a different format. A bigger size came in with a cover that

Cover: Laurence Dunn

Covers: Hubert Redmill

was not full colour as before, with only a few colours being used.

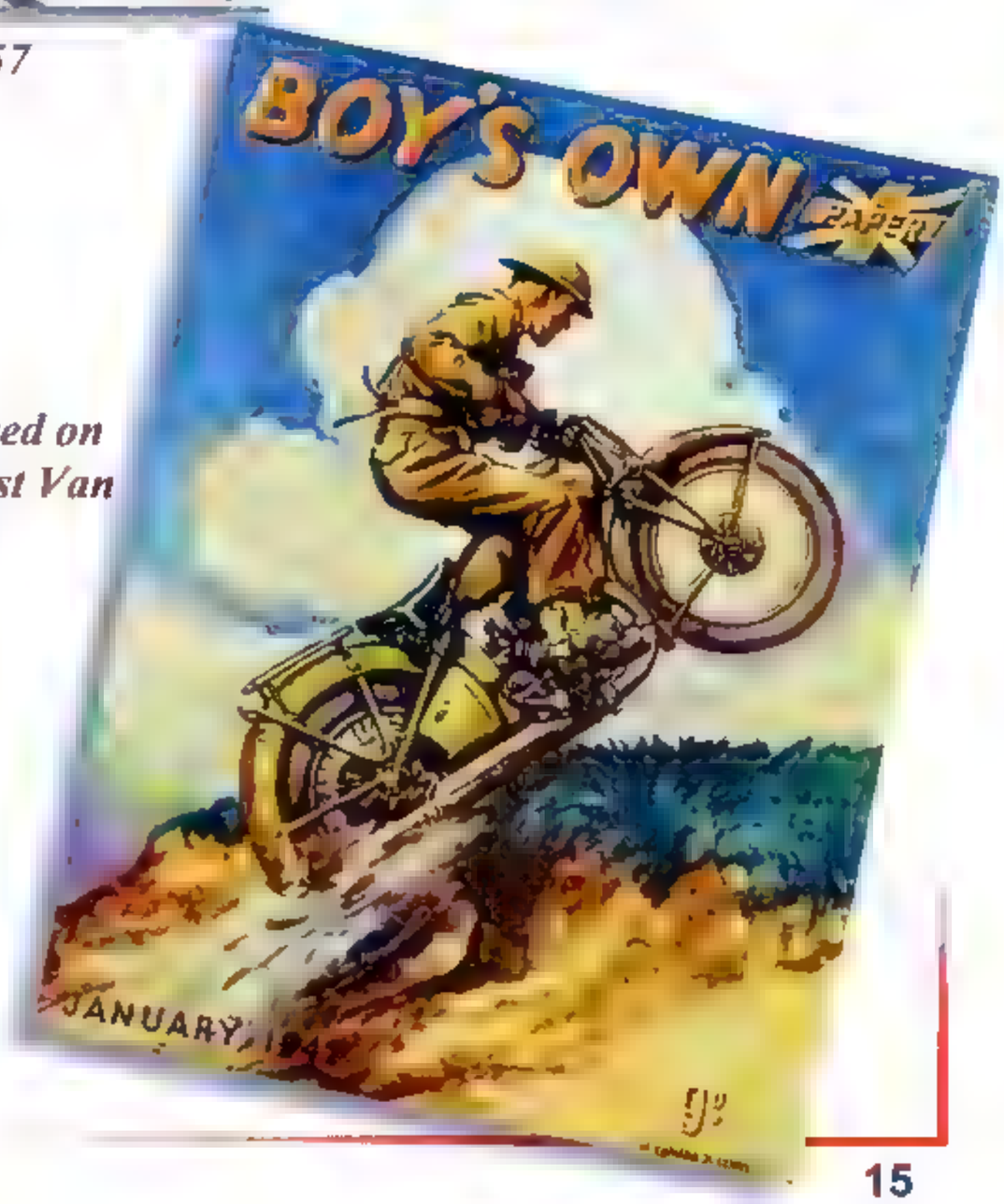
The issue published in March, 1966 had a different style of cover. Gone were the words *Boy's Own Paper* and in their place were the initials *B.O.P.* The price went up DOUBLE - from one shilling to two - and as a consequence the magazine folded in February, 1967. However, the *Boy's Own Annuals* continued until 1979.

Christmas 1957

The paper ran a club and for 1s 3d readers could become members. A gold-and- white metal badge was offered and the club ran classified ads for its members and also a pen-friend service.

The Oxford Die Cast Company recently brought out a die cast van with *B.O.P* on the side. The illustration on the side shows Biggles on a motorbike, quite a famous image from the year 1942. ❑

B.O.P - Coming to an end



1942 image used on Oxford Die Cast Van

A Look at Luck

by Harold Harpole

A series looking at the Luck of the Legion stories that ran in EAGLE from 1952 to 1961

Part 2

The Christmas *EAGLE* of 1953 started a new 'Luck of the Legion' story called 'The Secret City'. It was set in French Indo-China, a country that was to become Vietnam in later years. The country had a troubled past, with invaders coming from China, Japan and France.

Geoffrey Bond placed his characters in this location but had no idea that as the story unfolded during 1954 the country, then under French rule, would see the French rulers kicked out by the passing of the 1954 Geneva Convention. However, Geoffrey was historically correct as he had often told me "Luck was set in the early years of the twentieth century" so France would have been keeping the peace in Indo-China during the period of this story.

Episode one sees Luck instructed to march to a Legion poste with his men but as they near the fort it is obvious that all is not well. An unknown enemy has attacked the poste and stands between Luck's men and the French garrison. But by episode two the Englishman has come up with an idea and that is to use the river behind the fort and float up to the back of the poste on logs. This works well and Luck meets up with Corporal Trenet who is in charge as all the higher officers have been killed. Defences are set up but it is realised that they have little chance as the enemy are Native Dacoits who will stop at nothing.

During the night Luck decides to send the garrison away by the way he and his men came in – on logs down the river. Luck stays behind armed with only a machine gun.

The bandits fire a few volleys and the Sergeant returns fire, but very shortly the bandits realise that fire is coming from only one point. They charge in, find the lone Legionnaire and shoot him.

The shot is not fatal and Luck is captured and taken to the bandits' H.Q., a village in the country. Here he is taken to see the ruler of the Black Flag Army, the Imperial Dragon. Although the Sergeant knows nothing of the Secret City, the Dragon is under the impression that he does. Unable to answer questions about it the Legionnaire is tied up and slung into the condemned cell.

During the night Luck is visited by two men from Ling-Cham's village who are opposed to the Dragon and the three escape into the jungle and meet up with Ling-Cham. Here, he tells Luck of the Secret City, and how he would like the Legion to find it for his people. A map of how to find the city is hidden in the slats of a fan that can be seen by holding it to the light.

The Englishman gives his assurance that he will try his best to get the Legion to co-operate and makes his way back to the nearest Legion poste disguised as one of the locals. But, when the C.O. is informed, he disbelieves the story and forbids Luck to take any action on behalf of Ling-Cham.

Sharing his disappointment with Trenet, Luck comes up with a plot to help the jungle villagers. They decide to stage a kidnapping to look as though Luck, Trenet and Bimberg have been abducted and they set about turning their living quarters upside down and then running off in the night.

The night has its problems, such as a pair of tigers they meet, but the trio finally reach Ling-Cham's village. After a rest the trio then set off with the map to find the Secret City. They come across several holdups including "The Pit of Pride". Here, Bimberg falls in and seems to be lost but later appears from a hole followed by a baby elephant. The animal takes a fancy to Bimberg and it hangs around the Legionnaires as they journey on, but that night the baby elephant, which they have called 'Mumbo-Jumbo', wanders away.

Marching on next morning they enter marshy land and come across a native stuck in quicksand. He is helped out by the trio and the native, who is called Nha-Tam, is a fisherman who knows about the quest to reach the Secret City. He offers a short cut by way of payment for rescuing him and the Legionnaires are happy to follow him but later find out it was a trap as they are taken to a village that has the Imperial Dragon as master.

Bimberg is tortured by tickling, so Luck discloses that the map is hidden in the fan.The Dragon decides to release the trio but on a disappearing island in the middle of a river. Once they are on the island the marks on a tree reveal that the river will drown them at high tide.

They await their fate but along the river floats a boat that has broken its moorings. They manage to get the empty boat and sail away until they reach a friendly village. Here, they are made welcome and after telling their story they meet Gnuyet, a young lady with "special powers". She reads Luck's palm and convinces him that the Secret City is in the lines on his hand. Actually it was in his head. There are not many women in the Luck stories, so Gnuyet was quite refreshing.

Highly delighted, the Legionnaires are then invited to an evening of dancing and rejoicing; and after a good night's sleep they are on their way again.

So, towards dawn, Luck sets out to find the dacoits' encampment and overhears "The Dragon's" instructions.
THE DOGS OF LEGIONNAIRES HAVE BEEN SOUNDLY WHIPPED SLEEP UNTIL THE SUN IS HIGH — THEN I GIVE MY FINAL INSTRUCTIONS .
AND I'LL BE LISTENING !

They march on through the day, coming across various problems, such as a python that traps the Sergeant who escapes thanks to Bimberg's knife. They march on and find markers shown on the map. By nightfall they are on the outskirts of the Secret City and march up the long line of steps leading to the ruins. A brief reconnoitre is recommended by Luck but as they are about to separate, marching footsteps are heard coming up the steps. It is the Dragon and his men; so the Legionnaires take to hiding.

Quite safe in hiding, the trio can hear what is being said by the Dragon as he addresses his men.

They hear of several locations in the ruins and terms such as "Under dead men's bones" and "Beware the God of Sudden Death!"

Carefully they move through the ruins and find a tunnel, which they walk down to come across a burial chamber. In the centre is a large hole and Luck decides to climb down into it. As he starts down he loses his footing and falls in. The hole turns out not to be very deep. The other two jump down and they follow an underground mine shaft.

The Imperial Dragon

After some distance, and after encountering a nest of bats, they meet up with the Imperial Dragon and his men coming the other way; but there is no time for fighting as the far end of the shaft collapses leaving them trapped. The two sides decide on a compromise and look for a way out. The Sergeant finds a hole and the men escape to the surface. As the Legionnaires and the Dacoits emerge the Imperial Dragon discovers an idol covered with sapphires. He and his men think they have found the secret of the city and rush forward en-masse but the floor gives way and they hurtle to their deaths.

The Legionnaires escape the destruction but are cut off by a fall of rock caused by the collapsing floor and they are entombed without food or water. Things are looking bleak until they hear a tapping. Outside it is the C.O. and the Legion who have followed the Imperial Dragon and Luck and his companion are dug out.

The company await the arrival of mining engineers and as they do so Mumbo Jumbo appears and squirts water at Bimberg bringing the seven-month story to an end with a splash.

The following week we have a very intriguing story, 'The Brotherhood of The Bat'. It is known that Geoffrey Bond helped produce a 15-minute weekday serial of *Luck of the Legion* on Springbok Radio in Rhodesia and, although we don't know every story that featured, we do know that this story was transmitted because we have the first episode on disc (still available to members).

The story started in *EAGLE* dated 6th August, 1954 in a country known as part of French West Africa – Algeria. Fort Dervish is the opening location and Luck and co have just returned from Indo-China. The company await the arrival of General de Madre

and preparations go ahead, including Bimberg practising on the trombone for the ceremonial parade. Meanwhile, outside a Moroccan prison, two followers of "The Bat" are about to spring their leader from his cell.

After regrouping, The Bat's followers plan an attack on Fort Dervish to coincide with the General's visit.

Inside the fort the band are marching in readiness but Bimberg can't remain in step with his trombone and gets into a real mess. He's arrested and put in jail. As the fort settles down to await the V.I.P. distant shots are heard and the episode finishes with a lone injured Legionnaire on horseback coming through the gates to inform them that the General's party has been ambushed.

Quickly, a party of horsemen is assembled and rides to where the General's party was attacked. They find nothing and Luck is asked to investigate. He accepts and asks for two others to visit the local town and seek out information. This is granted and the famous trio visit the market place in the town. Here they see a Legionnaire arguing with Hassan the donkey-boy over the price of fruit. The lad is manhandled by the Legionnaire Valk but Luck steps in and gives the bully a left-hook. Valk is dismissed to the barracks and the Sergeant talks to Hassan, who tells him that he has heard of treachery against the Legion. In the sands he draws a picture of a bat and Luck realises that the town may be full of The Bat's men.

Hassan advises a trip to the Jade Salamander - but after dark - and this the trio do. There, amongst the drinkers, they see the image of a bat in the dust on a mirror, and in front of it – Valk.

At the same time Hassan and his donkey are outside the Jade Salamander wondering what is going on inside. From the window he hears Luck taking Valk down a peg and asking him to report to barracks as ordered.

But the lad is seen and taken prisoner by one of The Bat's men; and his donkey is left all alone. Valk walks out, sees the fruit-bearing donkey and helps himself but he is stabbed by another of The Bat's men, thinking that he is Sergeant Luck. Valk's screams are heard inside and everyone rushes out.

Hassan's knife is found in Valk's back and Gendarmes arrest the boy. Luck steps in and takes the lad into his custody.

The following night the trio return to the Jade Salamander and Luck questions the owner Slimani while his companions search the area outside. The questions over, the Sergeant walks outside and someone calls him over. It is a boy called Zuweid, a friend of Hassan. The lad has information as to the meeting place of The Bat's men and Luck goes to investigate, telling Zuweid to search for his two companions.

Gun poised, the Sergeant walks into the meeting place but is coshed from behind. Meanwhile, Zuweid has found Trenet and Bimberg and they race to Luck's aid. A fight ensues, the Legionnaires are victorious and the Arabs run off. The trio then look around the place and come across an arsenal of guns and grenades. They also come across a note that lays out plans to paralyse all of North Africa.

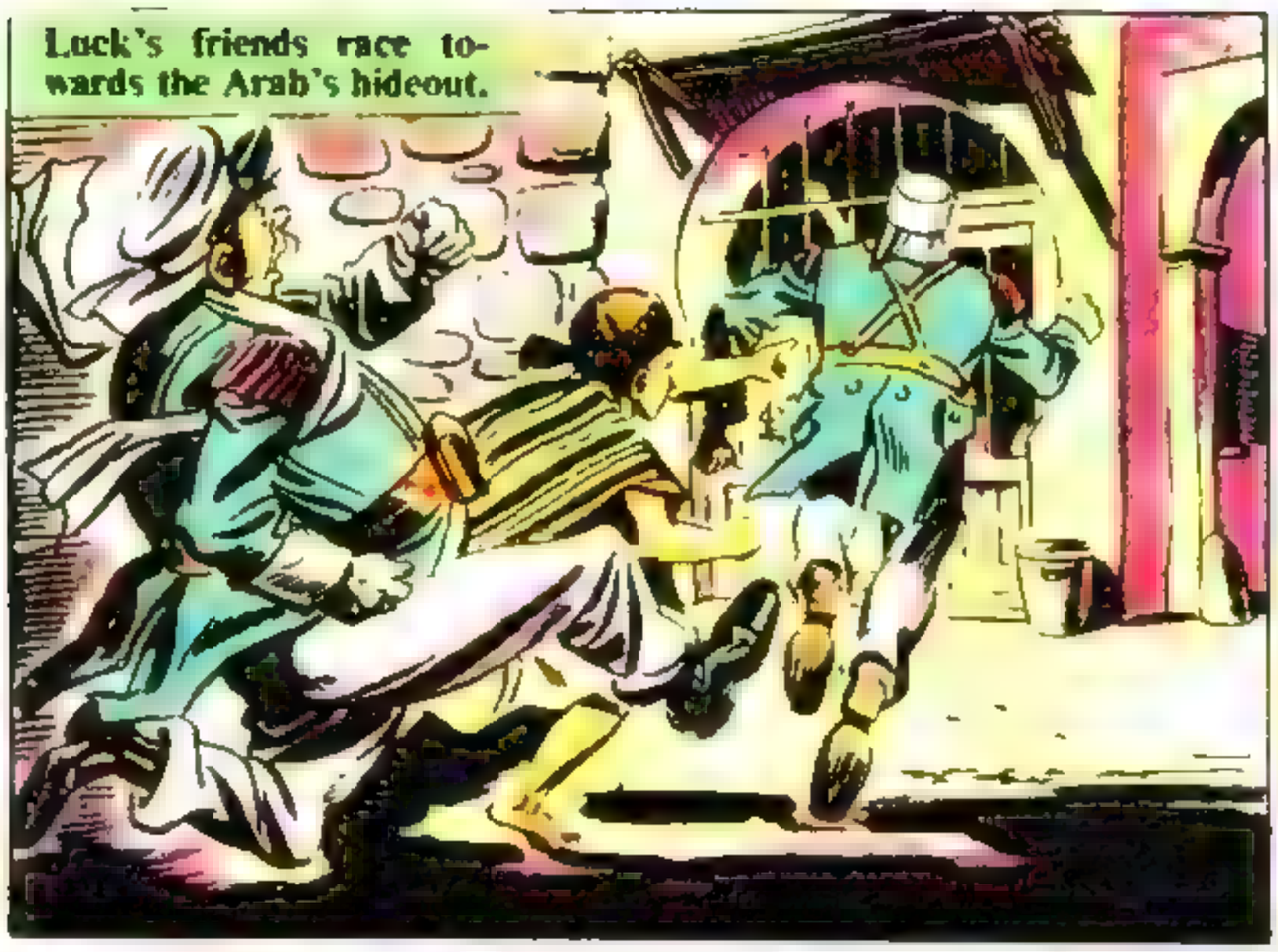
Outside, the Arabs realise that Luck may have found the note and take desperate measures to make sure he can't use the information. They set fire to the building. The Legionnaires escape through the roof and jump from one roof to another. They manage to make it back to Fort Dervish and show the note to the C.O. who suggests that Luck takes his companions to the Legion Cavalry on the other side of town. This they do and prepare to ride out with the Cavalry to save a caravan that is down on the note to be ambushed.

True to the note, a harmless caravan is attacked by The Bat and his men but they are soon repulsed by the Legion riding in. The Bat escapes pursued by Luck, who traps him in a pass, but a stray bullet from the battle below frightens Luck's horse and The Bat escapes.

The caravan is then escorted on its journey by the Cavalry but Luck and his companions go on ahead to look for The Bat. They come across an oasis and relax a little. Bimberg takes a shave and while the barber is absent takes a look around, then sees an Arab with a bat tattooed on his back. Meanwhile, Luck buys a rug with a large bat on it. The Sergeant is attacked from behind and left on the ground while the other two Legionnaires scout around for him. They can find nothing but after a while they see the French Colonial troops riding toward the oasis and inform them of the situation.

The story continued into the new year of 1955 and the first issue of that year sees Luck facing The Bat, who has a proposition for the Sergeant. First of all Luck is taken around an abandoned village. Here, much building work is in progress and The Bat explains that the rebuilt village will serve as his headquarters when he defeats the "unbelievers". After a visit to the arsenal, the Arab asks Luck to change sides and work with him as his lieutenant. At this, Luck rushes his enemy, but is held back from injuring him by two bodyguards.

Meanwhile, Trenet, Bimberg and the Legion Cavalry are still riding trying to find the Sergeant, while back at The Bat's H.Q. Luck is being buried up to his neck in sand and left to die!



Trenet, Bimberg and Zuweid to the rescue!

Before The Bat leaves the Sergeant to his fate, he removes his facial disguise and reveals himself as Selem Raschid, an evil Arab who first appeared in the first Luck story.

The vultures circle around awaiting their prey but, doing so, they are spotted from a distance by the Legion, who gallop in and dig out the Sergeant.

An overanxious lookout in Raschid's village spots Luck's rescue and opens fire, much to the dismay of the leader. The Legion return fire. As Luck knows where the arsenal is, he directs fire to it and there is an almighty explosion. Raschid realises that things are pretty bad and makes an escape on the opposing side of the village with two lieutenants.

Luck rides off to catch him and Trenet and Bimberg (on a donkey) ride off to catch the other two, who set off in a different direction. The Sergeant soon has the Arab leader under arrest and Bimberg manages to crash his donkey into the other two escapees.

Raschid is taken to the oasis to be locked up but his followers are all around and he is sprung from his cell while the three Legionnaires are asleep. On waking the trio have a fight on their hands, which looks to be a lost cause until the Cavalry arrive once again. With Raschid's followers rounded up Luck manages to get the truth from one of the Arab's lieutenants about who stabbed Valk and framed Hassan, the donkey boy. The Arabs own up and the boy is released to be re-united with his donkey, on which Bimberg has been riding around.

A celebration is planned and the Legion's bandmaster goes into rehearsal with his musicians who include Bimberg on the trombone. He is told to play "with a lilt". Next day it is the celebration proper; Bimberg shows up in a "kilt" and the final frame shows the bandmaster chasing him and brandishing his baton to clout him.

* * * * * *

The next story started in *EAGLE* dated 11th March, 1955 and was called 'Earthquake Island' — another story that was to be set in Indo-China. The first episode has a comical feel, caused by the antics of Bimberg. The Italian Legionnaire was the idea of artist Martin Aitchison who suggested to Geoffrey Bond that he put in the stories a comic character for light relief and Geoffrey came up with Bimberg.

In this first episode the three Legionnaires are on a ship in dock awaiting the sailing to the Far East. The Italian is not happy when told where they are going and makes a gesture to jump overboard. Luck cheers him up by presenting him with a new kepi, but when cast-off comes, Bimberg decides he wants to jump off again. Trenet stops him but in doing so loses his own kepi overboard. The Belgian then takes Bimberg's new kepi for himself and the Italian is obliged to pick up his old damaged headgear.

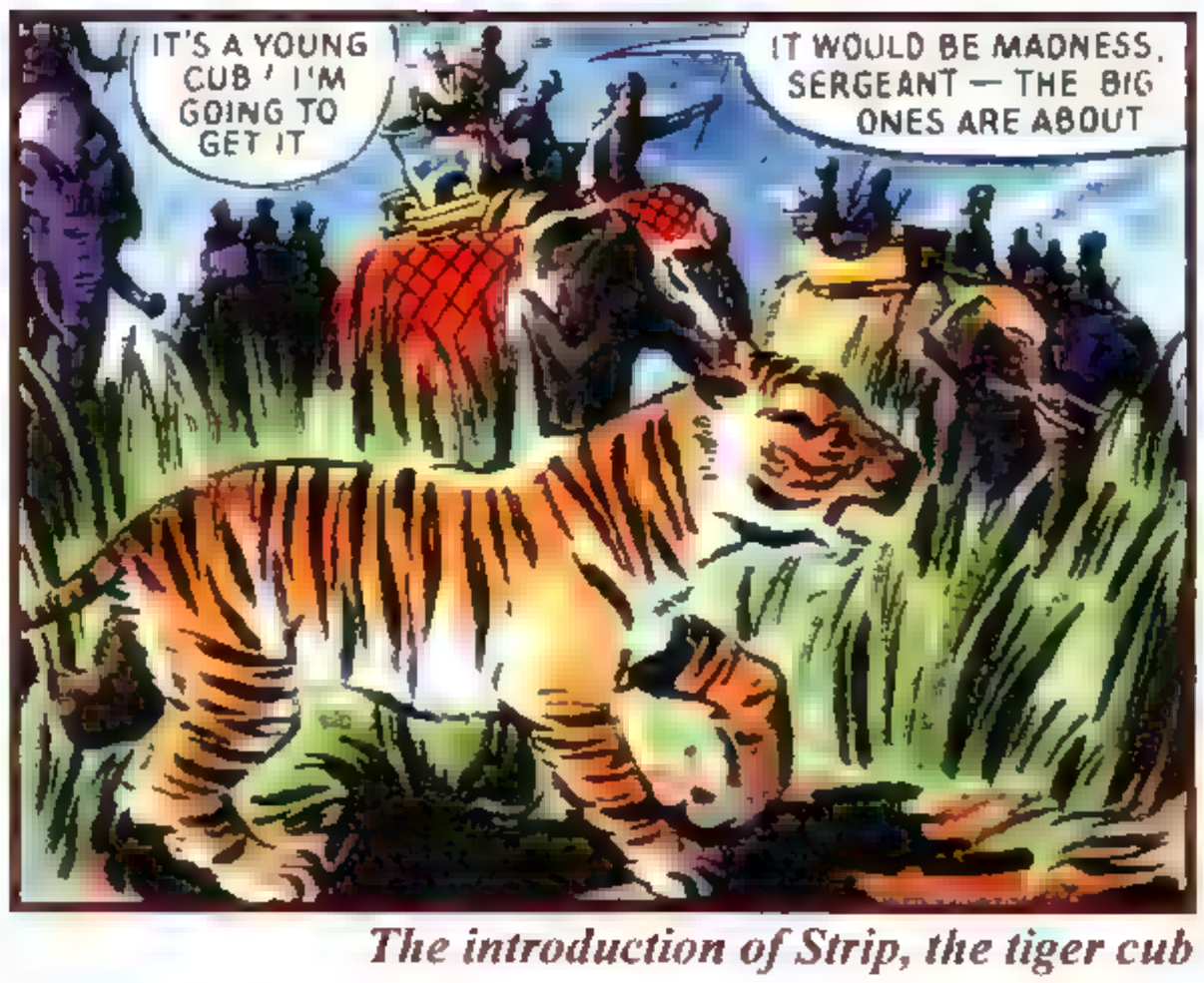
During the night the ship is tossed about in a merciless sea and, come morning, the ship is in a mess so the trio lend a hand clearing the deck. During the clean-up the captain tells the Sergeant that the ship is badly damaged and that they must put

NOW LISTEN TO ME THERE'S ONE WAY IN WHICH YOU CAN SAVE YOUR LIVES BY ADMITTING WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR FRAMING HASSAN, THE DONKEY BOY
WE KNOW HE DID NOT KILL THAT LEGIONNAIRE BUT WHO DID ?

The truth about Hassan comes out

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE EVER RIDDEN AN ELEPHANT I SUPPOSE, SERGEANT?
YES, IT'S NEVER BEEN ANYTHING BIGGER THAN CAMELS BEFORE! I SAY, THAT'S A WONDERFUL PIN YOU'VE GOT IN YOUR TURBAN.

The Legionnaires on safari



The introduction of Strip, the tiger cub

in to the nearest port for repairs. This turns out to be a port on the west coast of India and the ship sets sail for it.

However, as they make for this port, during the night they pass a small island that is showing a light in the darkness. The Captain knows nothing of this island but the Legionnaires are very curious.

They make the Indian port all right and Luck asks an old snake charmer about the mystery island. He is told that the island is uninhabited, and can't explain the light they saw.

As they wait for the ship to be repaired they have a wander about the place and come across a Rajah's palace. Thinking it would be polite to make contact with the Rajah they walk in and are taken to see the gentleman. He makes them very welcome and shows them around. On the walk they come across a small monkey chained to the wall but later they are wined and dined and then retire.

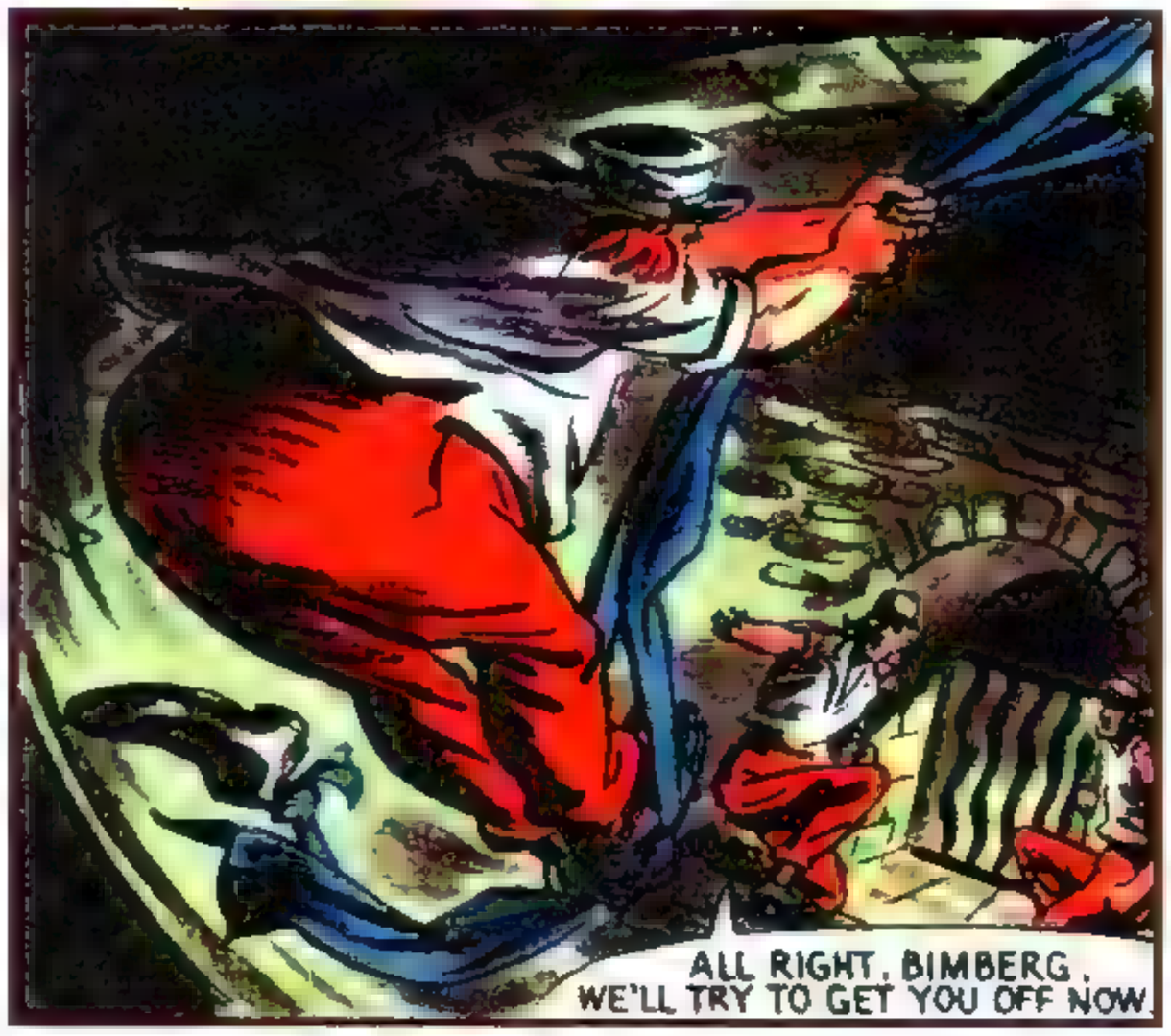
As Bimberg lies in his luxury bed he can't help thinking of the monkey and decides to creep downstairs to release the animal. This he does but the little one runs away and Bimberg is chased by the security staff to his bedroom.

The following morning the Rajah takes them on safari on the back of an elephant and they see a tiger cub on its own. Luck jumps down to pick it up but mother tiger sees the move and attacks the Sergeant. Bimberg is the hero as he shoots the mother tiger and decides to take the motherless animal into his care. They name him Strip.

The tiger cub spends the night on Bimberg's bed but when the Legionnaires try to open the bedroom door they find it locked. With a hairpin the Italian opens the door but finds the Rajah's men standing in the doorway. The Rajah explains that his jewel, The Eagle of Mitra, has gone missing and, as Bimberg has been seen walking about at night, he is suspect.

Although claiming their innocence, the trio are marched to the edge of a snake pit to stand on a ledge until they admit the theft. On the other side of the pit wall they see a window and decide to tie their sashes together and swing across to the window. This they do successfully and make an exit from the pit.

The three Legionnaires and the tiger cub follow a tunnel which comes out at ground level. They escape to the snake charmers shack and ask for his help to get to Earthquake Is-



Escape from the snake pit

Soon . . .
WELL, KHALID, YOU'RE RETURNING TO YOUR KINGDOM AT LAST—YET YOU DON'T SEEM VERY PLEASED
I'M UNEASY, SERGEANT — I CAN'T TRUST MY UNCLE. I HAVE A FEELING THAT ALL IS NOT YET OVER!
I THINK IT IS, MON BRAVE — YOUR UNCLE HAS ADMITTED DEFEAT. ANYWAY, HE'S STILL ON THE ISLAND — WHAT CAN HE DO?

Return to the mainland

The Legionnaires, Khalid and Strip

land. He offers to speak to a friend with a boat but the friend backs down when told the destination. Finally, the old man finds them a boat but explains that they are on their own from now on.

The island is reached without problems but a survey of the area on landing causes a shock. A young lad is using a searchlight to send flashes to the mainland. They introduce themselves to the boy who tells them he is called Khalid and that he is the real Rajah of Mitra. His uncle on the mainland had him kidnapped and imprisoned on the island and had stolen the Eagle of Mitra.

The tiger cub becomes alarmed and the three men see some of the uncle's men taking arms to a boat in the distance. The young lad explains that a stock of arms and ammunition is stored on the island by his uncle and that his men come for the arms from time to time.

The following morning, Luck and his men go with Khalid to the ammunition dump and have a plan to take the arms and refill the boxes with rocks and pebbles. This they do and the following night the uncle's rebels come for more ammunition and take away the rock-filled boxes.

Luck forms a strategy to fight the uncle but first they need food. Khalid says he knows of some supplies on the mainland and so, leaving Bimberg and the tiger cub, on the island, Luck, Trenet and Khalid set off for the supplies. As they load the boat up with the food they are spotted by some rebels and fired at. Trenet takes a bullet in the shoulder but Luck and Khalid manage to get the boat going with their injured companion.

Back on the island they find Bimberg and await developments. They are not long in coming. The uncle's men invade the island but soon retreat after some good shooting from Luck and Trenet and Bimberg on the machine gun. The rebels gone, Khalid takes them to a secret tunnel that runs under the sea to the uncle's palace.

Luck and his corporal decide to go along the tunnel to the mainland and come out in the uncle's private quarters. They wait until he enters and then jump him and take him back to the Earthquake Island using the tunnel. They are halfway across when the roof springs a leak and a rock-fall fills the tunnel with seawater. The Legionnaires make a dash for it and manage to get to the island but there is no sign of the rebel Rajah.

A new plan is hatched. They invite the Rajah over to talks to see if a compromise can be reached. A message is sent over by searchlight and, surprisingly, the Rajah agrees.

With the Rajah back on the island, the two parties wine and dine and a plan is formed. The Legionnaires with Khalid will return to the mainland and explain to all concerned what has happened. The uncle will then admit defeat.

This comes about but it is a trap by the uncle as his followers will be waiting on the mainland. The Legionnaires find this out when they arrive on the shore but, just as they do, Earthquake Island erupts and starts to break up and then disappears beneath the waves, taking the wicked uncle and his rebels with it.

Back on the mainland the little monkey that Bimberg freed in the early part of the story reappears with the Eagle of Mitra. Khalid takes hold of it and all the natives including the old snake charmer acknowledge him as the rightful Rajah.

The story finished in *EAGLE* dated 4th November, 1955. ❑

The Eagle Society Annual Gathering, 2011

by Our Own Correspondent

The Berkshire Arms is situated at Midgham, Berkshire, on the north side of the A4. Dating back to the 18th century it was built on an old gravel pit as a farmhouse and remained in private hands until the 1980s. In 2002 it was purchased by the Chef and Brewer Organisation. The *Eagle Society* assembled there on 6th September for its annual gathering.

At 12.30, "The Team" assembled for one of its quarterly meetings and the Society's business was discussed. The meeting over, a light lunch was taken and other members were welcomed as they started to arrive.

The evening meal was enjoyed at 5.30 and afterwards several members talked about some items in their collections. John Swan started by showing the *Eagle/Girl* paint box, complete with cardboard outer, a rare item and even rarer with the outer that John had. He then showed the *Eagle Fishing Tin* that Chad Valley produced. The tin came with a handle and the outside of the tin was very colourful, showing fishing scenes and giving advice on keeping tadpoles etc. It had the backing of George Cansdale, *EAGLE*'s natural history expert.

Next, John produced a framed painting by Peter Jackson of a Victorian school scene. This colourful painting had many hidden items as the class depicted showed the pupils who were up to all manner of naughtiness while the master looked on. His final item was a four-framed strip from a 1962 *Swift Annual* called 'Desperate Dan'. Had no-one told the editor of the annual that 'Desperate Dan' was a copyright character of the D.C. Thomson organisation?, he asked.

It was good to see Ted Herbert again as we hadn't seen him for some years. Ted talked about a box of the Crescent *Dan Dare* metal figures. Ted's box contained the very rare rocket launcher, missing from many sets owing to its weak metal structure. The Eaglewall set of *Dan Dare* figures was Ted's next subject. Eaglewall are probably better known for their ship and airplane models and Ted's box was a very rare item.

Next was a mini auction of some of Adrian Perkins's collection. The best price went to a mini *Eagle Dictionary*, just a little bigger than a match box.

New member Brian Thomas then told us of how he had built up a collection of *EAGLE* items in only twelve months, and this included a number one copy of *EAGLE*! Brian showed photos of his very impressive collection.

After this a general discussion took place on next year's *Eagle Gathering*. It was agreed to go to Southport again, and several members offered talks for the event. Financial matters regarding the *Society* were then discussed as we have made a loss over the last few years. Members agreed that a rise in the subscription rate was a must and a price was agreed. After drinks and socialising, we retired to bed.

On the following morning we enjoyed a hearty breakfast and then assembled for a very professional talk on *Classics Illustrated* by the owners of the company who now hold the British copyright, Jeff Brooks and his son Jon. The two men are based at Thatcham, just down the road, and they told of the history of the publication and today's situation.

They have managed to get the magazines in W.H. Smith and Waterstones, and the internet sales were very encouraging. They can be contacted on *www.classiccomicstore.com*. After the talk everyone received a free copy of one of the *C.I.* magazines.

The rest of the day was optional and members did their own thing, some going to the Living Rain Forest and enjoying the steamy vegetation that harboured several species of mammals, birds and butterflies. Others preferred walking around the Newbury Reed Beds, a nature reserve that had some good walks around lakes and woodland. For some, shopping in Newbury was an attraction, and for others a day spent quietly in the Berkshire Arms was a good idea.

At 5.30 we sat down for Dinner and this was followed by a Powerpoint presentation from David Britton on 'War with the Sioux'. David looked at the famous battle between General Custer and the Sioux nation as portrayed in *EAGLE* by Charles Chilton and Frank Humphris. David described how well Chilton had stayed with the historical facts, although some parts where Jeff Arnold and Luke appeared had to be fiction. He also showed his photographs taken when he visited the battle locations in America.

After a coffee break it was the turn of Harry Royle to do a slide presentation of the history of the cinemas in Colchester.

On the Thursday morning after breakfast members filed in for the last discussion group of the meeting. Howard Corn gave a vote of thanks to Nigel McMurray for organising another successful *Eagle Gathering*, and then a minute's silence was observed in memory of the late Geoff Provins. After that it was 'Bon Voyage' and members said their goodbyes. ❑

Photographs from Harry Royle

Brian Thomas shows off his Eagle cardigan

Harry Royle talks about Colchester cinemas

David Britton talks on 'War with the Sioux'

Classics Illustrated by Jon and Jeff Brooks

An Eagle Club membership certificate (John Swan)

David Britton and Harry Royle

An Eagle Paintbox shown by John Swan

FROM UNDER THE 1950S CHRISTMAS TREE

Pepys Card Games

by James Howard

Children today enjoy a much different Christmas than we did in the fifties. Today it's electronic toys (that cost a fortune), computer games, MP3 players, DVDs etc. to play with, and a good deal of the day will be spent watching a HD television and the latest blockbuster films.

So what did we do on Christmas Day in the fifties? The day was spent relatively quietly. We may have had an *Eagle Annual* to read, maybe an *Eagle* jigsaw to do, Dinky Toys to play with, a Meccano set, or a Hornby Train set to set up. Dad had two days off work to be with us all day and he would delight in playing with our toys and sometimes we would play together!

In the morning some of us would go to church and then it would be a chicken (or turkey if you were lucky) for dinner. After a tea of lots of jelly and custard and Christmas cake we would play games around the table. Some played Monopoly or another board game, but some of us would play card games.

It was for this market that Castell Brothers of Hatton Garden, London, brought out their range of card games based on characters that children could identify with. Under the logo of Pepys many different card games were available.

The company boasted over 50 different titles and these packs of cards made ideal stocking-fillers.

The Pepys card games were quick to pick upon the Hulton Press characters of *Dan Dare* and *Jeff Arnold*; and characters from *Girl* were also put into one card game. An original *Dan Dare* card game, if bought today from a dealer, could cost you in the region of £30 to £70 a pack but thanks to the *Retro Range* of games it is now possible to purchase a replica pack for the modest price of £3 to £4 (see *Eagle Times* Vol. 23 No. 4).

The artwork on these cards is not by Frank Hampson, but is a good effort nonetheless. The cards were very colourful and recalled many of the characters and spaceships from the early *EAGLE* strips. The *Riders of the Range* cards were very similar. Not Frank Humphris, but well drawn all the same. An advert for the cards reads "Vivid, colourful cards by the brilliant artists of Eagle." Who these artists were is unknown to me.

Some years ago I came across a scratchboard advert for the *Riders of the Range* cards that would have been presented to the toy trade. We did show it in *Eagle Times* Vol. 18, No. 1, but now we can show it in colour.

Pepys also published a pack of cards with a *French Foreign Legion* theme but they were not 'Luck of the Legion'. Why, oh why not? The cards were poorly drawn, depicting skirmishes in the desert and all the sort of things Luck would have been involved in, so why didn't Castell take up a licence from Hulton's to feature the *EAGLE* Legionnaires? They would have sold much better with an *EAGLE* connection.

The *Girl* cards were different, having many of the characters from this publication all in the one game.

One of the Pepys R
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& their families
Twenty-eight Gam
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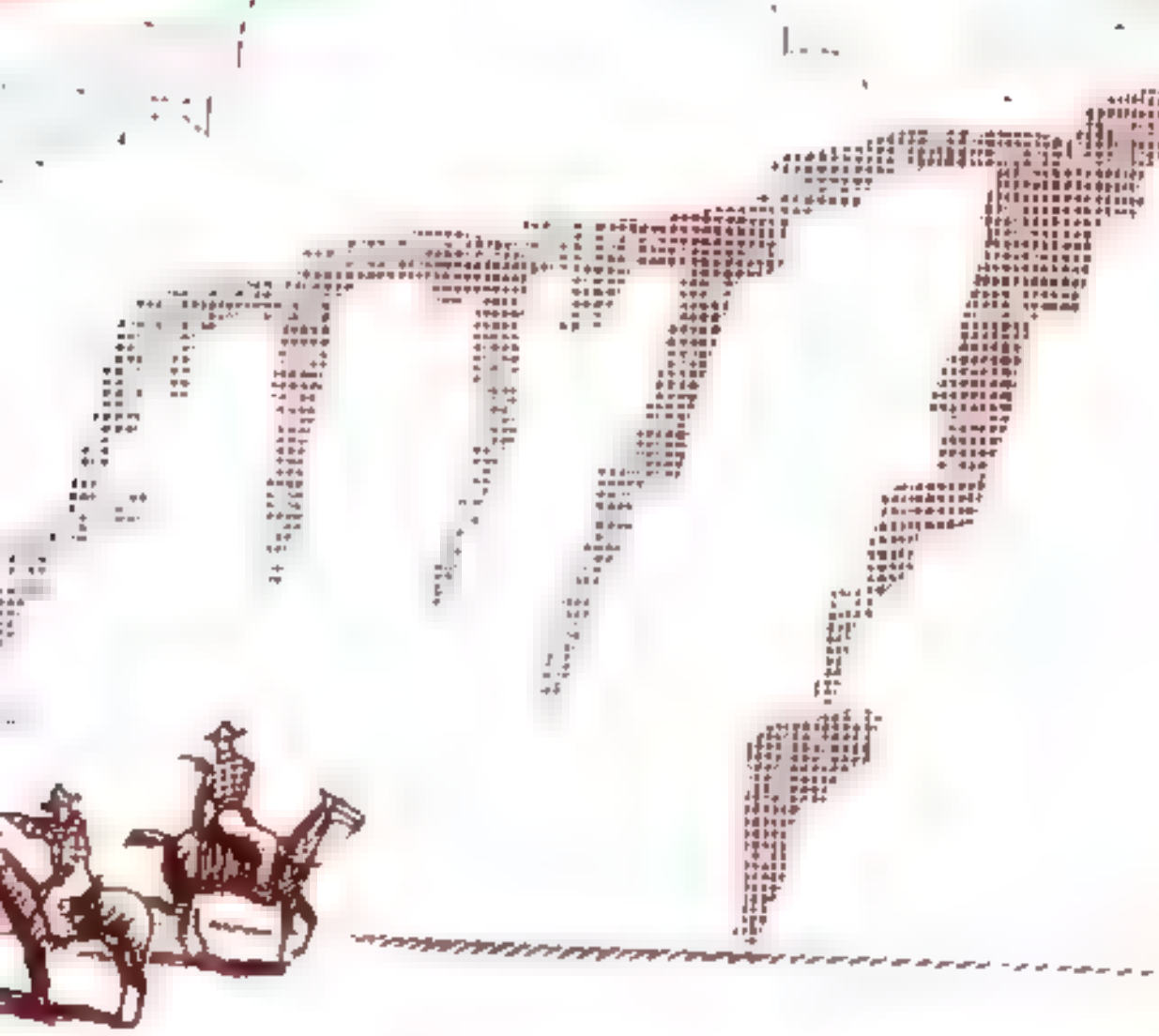

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TAWNY OWL

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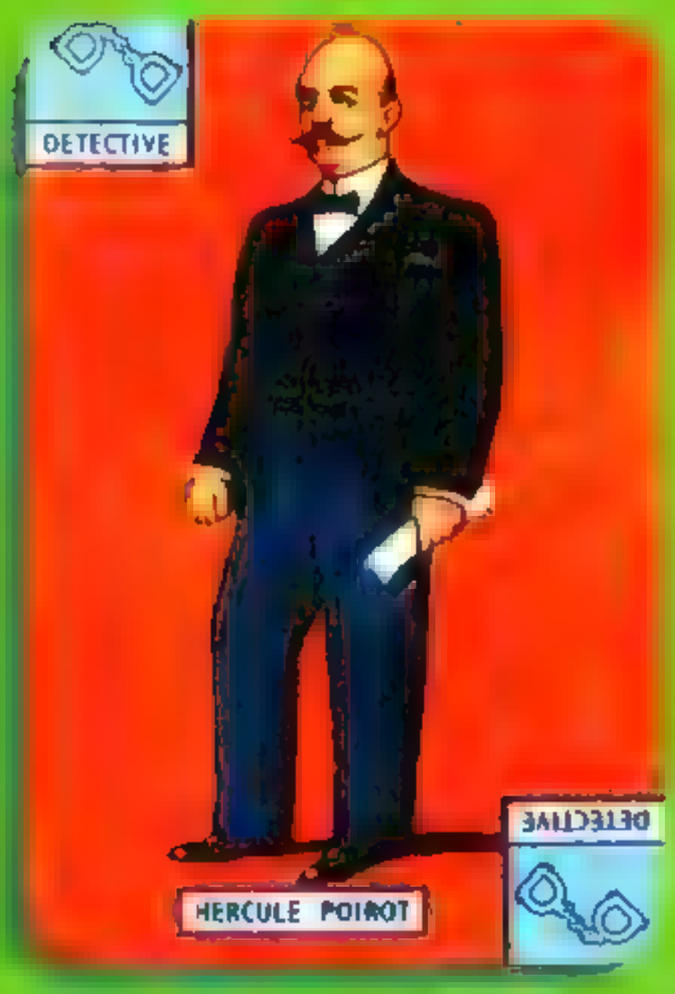
DETECTIVE
HERCULE POIROT
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COACH

CINDERELLA
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DETECTIVE
LEMMY CAUTION
DETECTIVE

7
Grumpy

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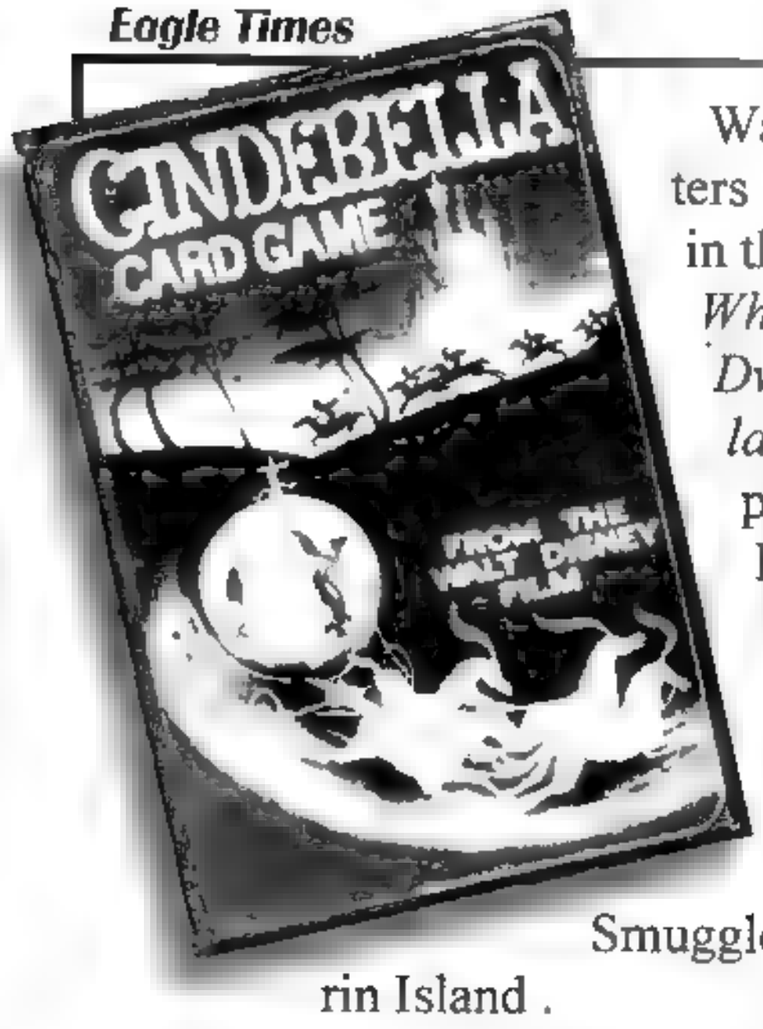
Snow White



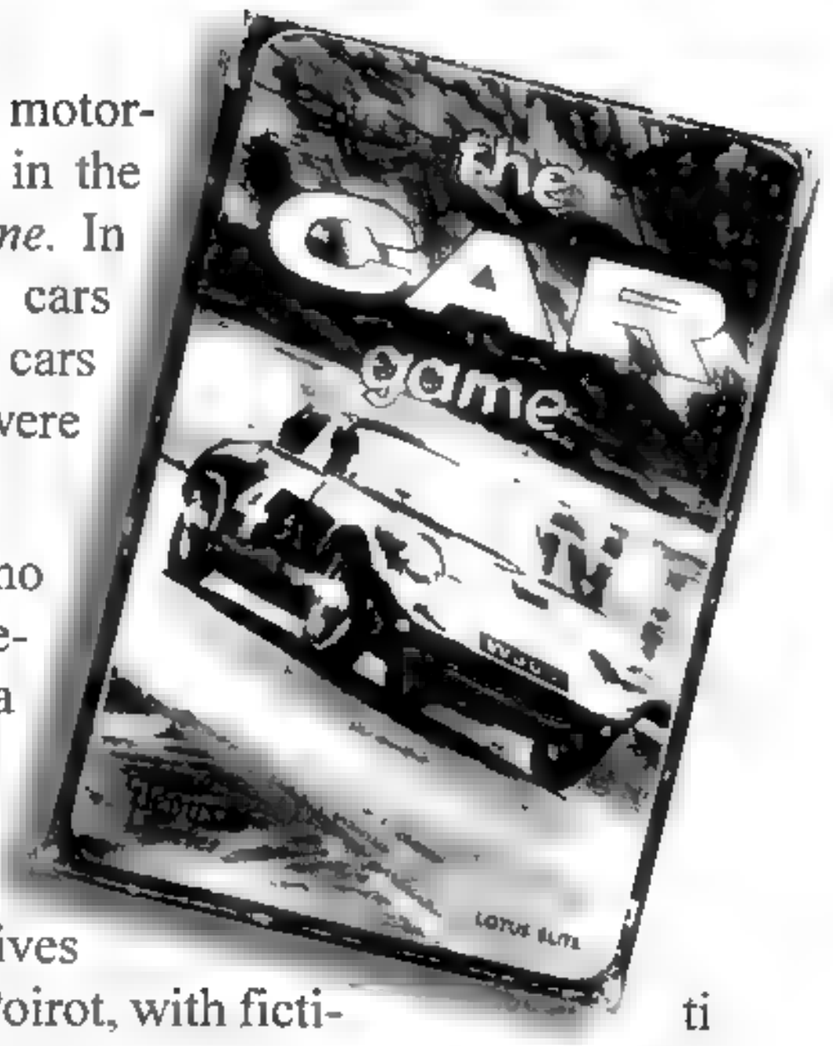
Walt Disney's characters were also depicted in the games and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella* had their own card packs. Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* were in the range and one could join them in a circus adventure, a trip to Smugglers Top or on Kirrin Island .

Richmal Crompton's *Just William* was also available and for this set the artwork was by Thomas Henry, who illustrated the William books.

Natural history was also featured. *British Birds* was a very attractive pack giving full colour descriptions of our feathered friends. The pack *Wild Life* showed pictures of mammals and birds from the Norfolk Wildlife Park and two games could be played with this set.

The long established game of snap was featured in the pack of *Animal Snap* cards that showed young animals from all over the world. The set entitled *Farmyard Cries* had a set of cards showing animals from the farm drawn by Racy Helps. Each card was different with delightful and amusing illustrations. The idea of the game was to collect animal families and then imitate animal cries.

The card game *Speed* showed all manner of speed on wheels depicting racing cars, motor bikes, speedway riders, racing cyclists etc. Another set with a motoring theme came in the set *The Car Game*. In this set modern cars were shown and cars of yesteryear were also depicted.



For people who liked "Who-done-it" there was a game called *Crime Club*. The cards came showing detectives such as Hercule Poirot, with fictitious crooks, crime locations and objects of murder such as guns and blunt instruments. The object of the game was to be the first to solve a crime.

Muffin the Mule was a popular children's television character in the early fifties and Pepys put out a pack of cards showing Muffin and all his friends.

Other titles included *Peter and the Wolf, Woodland Happy Families, Faraway Tree, Football Whist, Circus Snap, Contraband,* and *Mickey and The Beanstalk* among the other sets.

A card game with a difference was called *Skid-o*. This game was based on speedway racing and the pack of cards came with four small cardboard speedway riders on their own stand and a fabric lined paper speedway track. Players moved their rider around the track by taking a card from an upturned pack and acting on the instructions on it.

Most of the packs contained 44 cards and many of the games were played in the style of whist, i.e. making as many tricks as you could.

You can find most of the above packs of cards at antique fairs, car boot or jumble sales as I did. Prices are usually moderate unless you come across the *EAGLE* card packs or other popular children's characters of the fifties and then prices do go up. The price in the fifties was 3s 11d (20 pence).

EAGLECON 80

Visual Memories of the only London convention ever held solely for *EAGLE* enthusiasts

by Adrian Perkins **Part One**

The *Astral Group* held the *EAGLE* Convention at the Y Hotel, London W1, over the weekend 11th - 13th April, 1980.

Inspired by Denis Gifford's Comics 101, I thought maybe a single comic title could create similar interest, especially if that title was *EAGLE*.

Many people helped me to organise and run the convention including: Frank Hampson, Alan Vince, Simon Garrett, Ray Aspden, Mike Brown, Roger Bayliss, Roger Coombes, Charles Gunther, Alan Whitehead, Eric Fernie, Richard Heagarty, Gerry Webb, Keith Page, Brian Edwards, John Woodland, David Slinn, Andrew Coffey and Bruce Porteous.

I was enthusiastically supported by many involved in the proper *EAGLE* origination, such as Marcus Morris, Clifford Makins, Ellen Belchem (née Vincent), Macdonald Hastings and Ruari Maclean.

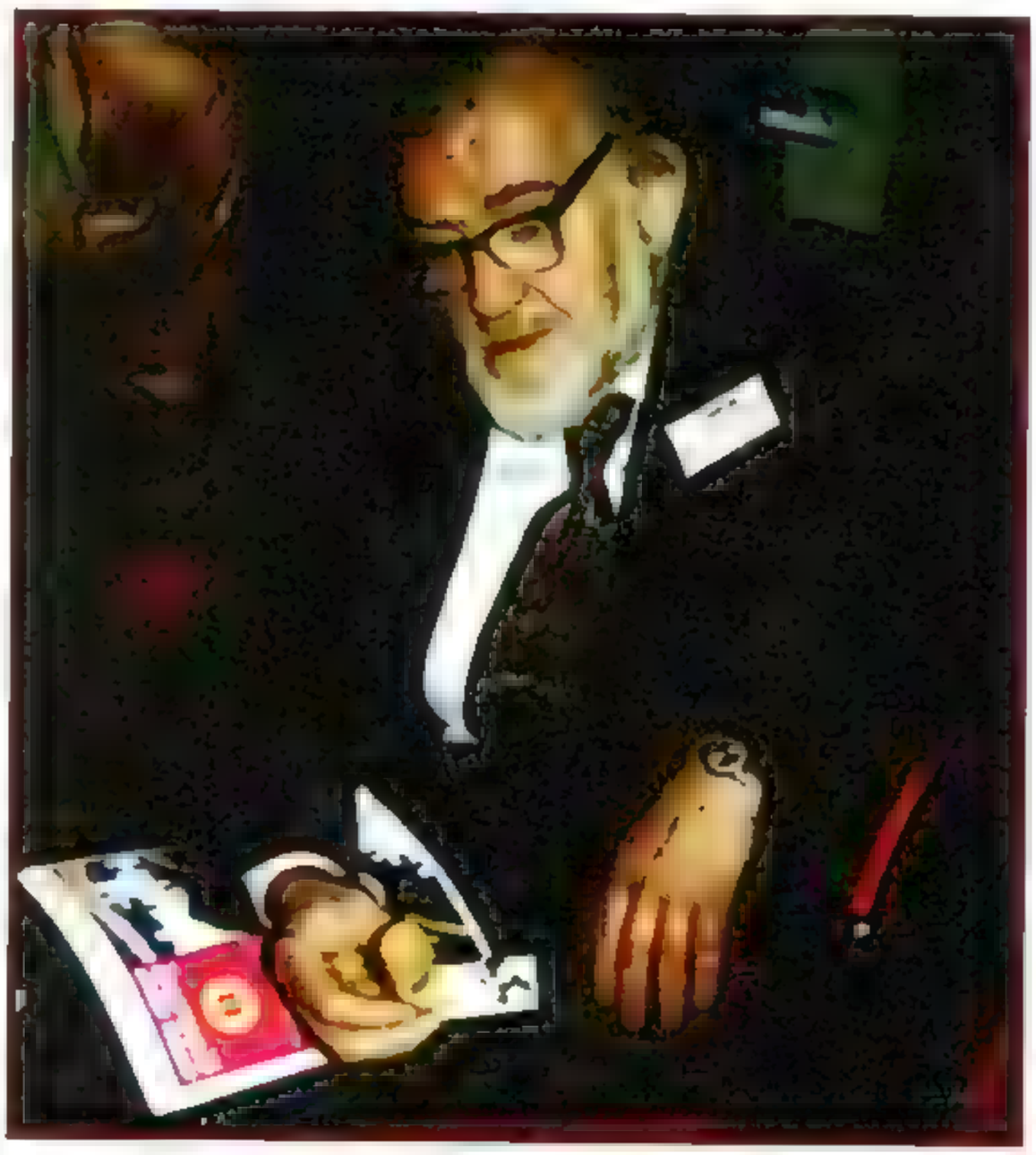
Of all those involved in the planning Derek Lord was certainly by far the most involved.

When in the autumn of 1978, as a representative of a small group of *EAGLE* enthusiasts, I wrote to Marcus Morris saying I was contemplating a London conference to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of *EAGLE*, he quickly wrote back positively, adding that I must contact a Mr. Derek Lord in Pinner who knew much more about inside *EAGLE* than he himself could remember.

I met up with Derek soon after receiving Marcus's letter. Recently semi-retired from being a freelance editor, he was ***really*** pleased to see that letter from Marcus stating that he was an authority on *EAGLE* ...

The EAGLECON '80 Committee: Adrian Perkins, Roger Bayliss Bruce Porteous, Alan Vince, Simon Garett, Roger Coombes, John Woodland, Gerry Webb, Keith Page, Mike Brown, Jim Slattery. Including help from: Eric Fernie, Brian Edwards, Alan Williams, Richard Heagarty, Andrew Coffey and Mary Cadogan, with Denis Gifford and Derek Lord as Convention advisors

With a specially drawn 'Mekon' picture from Frank Hampson on its cover, the Official Souvenir Brochure was intended to sum up what information we then knew about EAGLE. The red/black and white design was from Alan Vince.



Frank Hampson in reflective mood at the start of the second day of EAGLECON 80, examining a miniature model of an "Electrobot", one of the many exhibits and images on display that paid tribute to his great, inventive mind.

Regarding contributors he provided dozens of invaluable contacts – most of whom he was personally able to draw into the 1980 *EAGLE* Convention mêlée.

Derek was a member of that event's *very* part-time planning committee for the two years it took to materialise to the Bloomsbury weekend.

Derek* and I kept in touch for many years afterwards – indeed he was as keen on *EAGLE* as I still am – and he provided vast quantities of background details for our enthusiasts' publications use.

At the *EAGLE* Convention we had interviews, panel discussions and slideshows. There were several displays of artwork, exhibits from Frank Hampson's studio - models and some of his artists' aids - and many display cabinets of merchandise.

Several of the interview sessions were conducted by Alan Vince. In December 2010, Alan provided me with the following article about his memories of the convention, entitled:

THE GOOD, THE SAD AND THE UGLY

A few people have often asked me why I hadn't yet included (in my articles on the past) a feature on EAGLECON 80 . I give one simple answer: while the convention had its good points it also had (for me) its sad and in the end, ugly memories. I still have a folder full of letters by me, to me and about me that, while now in the past, still bring back feelings of regret about the whole event. But time has moved on so I will try to be a little less negative while still voicing my own thoughts.

BEATING THE DRUM FOR EAGLECON '80
FRANK HAMPSON WRITES.....
Professor Jocelyn M Peabody Miss Anastasia Rebecca Digby
Controller Sir Hubert Gascoigne Guest Colonel Daniel MacGregor Dare
Flight Major Pierre Lafayette Pilot Captain Henry (Hank) Hogan
Pilot Captain David Bryan Spaceman (Cpl) Albert Fitzwilliam Digby
Cadet Flamer Spry Astral College Cadet Steve Valiant Astral College
Commander Lex O Malley (RN
and many others including Treens like Sondar Saturnians like Nikki and Thari Cryptosians like Lero and Stripey as well as Therons such as President Kazon in addition to very ordinary human civilians like Groupie and that man Hampson with Wilue the pooch
Welcome all old Eaglers to this reader's convention May you re-live if only briefly the special excitement of the big red panel with the Eagle on it
And may your dreams come as true as mine did that magic year of 1950
Best wishes
Frank Hampson
FRANK HAMPSON
co-founder of EAGLE and artist and creator of DAN DARE

A special message from Frank Hampson, the co-founder of EAGLE and creator of Dan Dare:
"May you re-live, if only briefly, the special excitement of the big red panel with the EAGLE on it. And may you dreams come true as mine did in the magical year of 1950."

THE GOOD

I think everyone involved in the planning and final staging of EAGLECON 80 must look back and feel it was worth it if only for the number of ex-*EAGLE* staff who made it to the event. It turned out to be a one-off in term of *EAGLE* VIPs, many of whom would pass away in the coming years. While the numbers attending were lower than we had hoped for, it still gave many fans of the magazine a chance to meet the much-loved contributors and I'm sure artists like Keith Watson and Richard Jennings really enjoyed themselves. We managed to have Marcus Morris there, the first time I had ever met the man, and Frank Hampson. Sadly the two never appeared together at the opening and Marcus didn't attend

Dan Dare and "Flamer" taking off for EAGLECON 80

* Derek died suddenly in 2004. We last spoke at the *Eagle Society*'s Manchester event in 2003, and I still miss receiving his neat, grammatically-precise letters.

the dinner. The 'Riders of the Range' "team" were there too, Charles Chilton and Frank Humphris. These two made a great double act and always enjoyed working together. As part of the committee I was responsible for the artwork displays, mounting and hanging the pages from IPC's vaults. Here I was lucky in that I managed to find examples of most of the famous *EAGLE* strips, cartoons and cutaways. Frank Hampson had his own display room with artwork and models. I also did two slide talks, 'Dan Dare' and 'Riders of the Range', and was responsible for the production of the convention brochure and posters.

I was also keen to keep an eye on all the exhibits as we couldn't afford any losses due to "souvenir hunters"! Being in such a position meant that I missed some of the other talks and slide shows but what I did see I really enjoyed and felt sure that others might have done a better job than me on Dan Dare and Jeff Arnold!! Maybe some fresh faces could have given a different slant on things, I don't know.

THE SAD

One of my saddest memories from EAGLECON 80 was an incident that I witnessed while keeping check on the art displays. Frank and Dorothy were coming towards me when I saw Marcus Morris to my left. Frank appeared to be avoiding the former *EAGLE* editor until Dorothy grabbed him by the wrist and literally forced the two men to shake hands. No words passed between them and Frank just nodded at Marcus and that was that. I

EAGLE
CONVENTION 1980
A CONVENTION FOR ENTHUSIASTS OF BRITAIN'S GREATEST STRIP CARTOON WEEKLY!
THE ACTION AT EAGLECON '80
Just a few of the characters we'll be meeting again, courtesy of their artists and creators...
The learned Professor Puff and his dog Wuff will visit us — that is if he remembers!
He may be there, floating around.
Convention banquet fit for all including a hungry spaceman.
We sincerely hope the chap and his colleques do not intervene but
But Harris Tweed definitely will.
Dragon's Dream
ASTRAL GROUP
OFFICIAL CONVENTION BROCHURE

A personal message from

MARCUS MORRIS

EAGLE CONVENTION

I send my very best congratulations to all those who have got together and worked so hard to establish this convention in memory of EAGLE. Certainly, for me, it brings back many happy - and some amusing - memories. It all seems so long ago since that first issue was launched, and it is very gratifying that so many people seem still to remember it. It is also good that there are, it seems, so many people who are concerned about the quality of publications for children, whether in the strip-cartoons or words or illustrations. I hope your conference will be a great success.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

MARCUS MORRIS

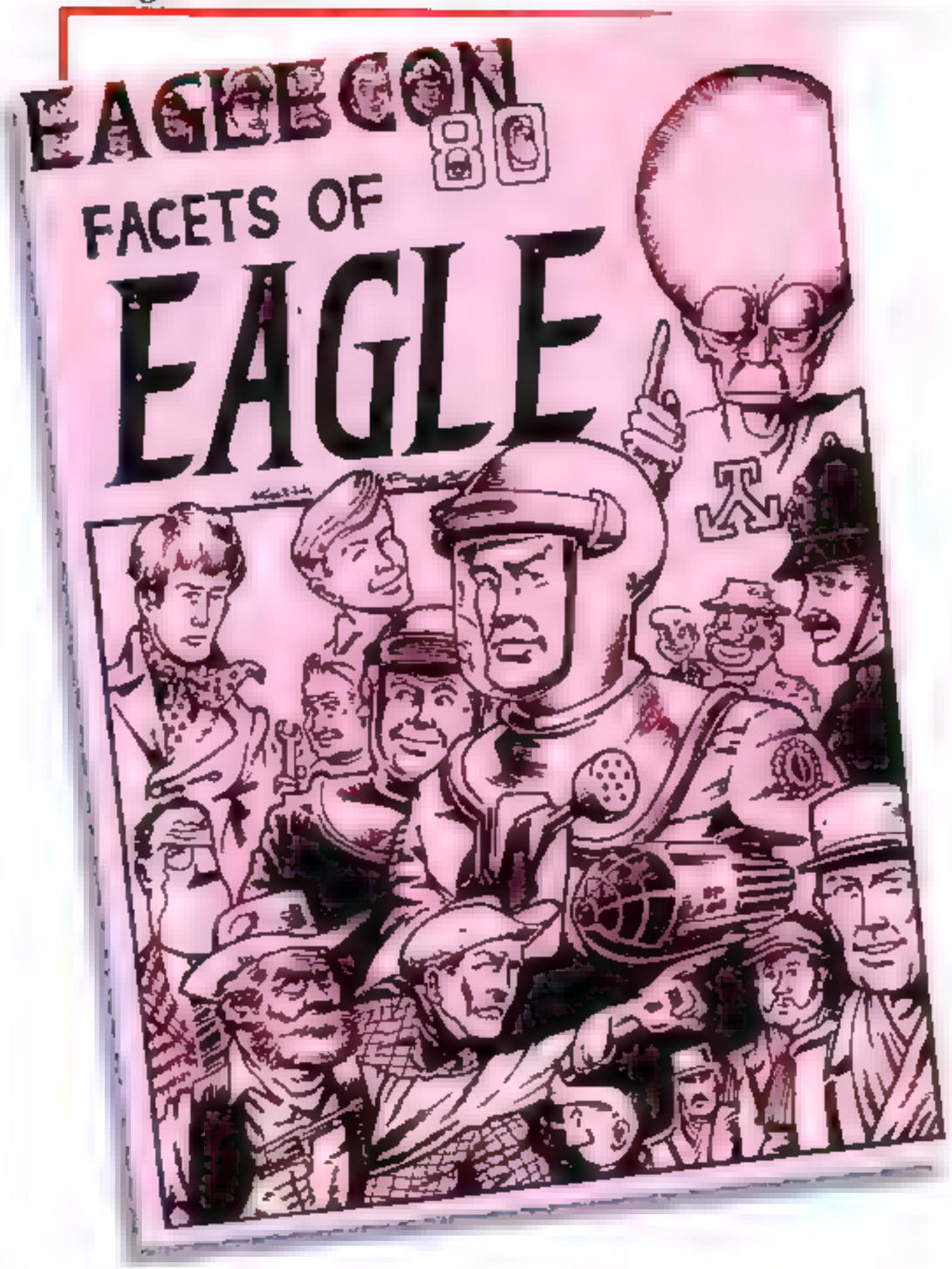
EAGLE

A personal message from Marcus Morris, the other co-founder of EAGLE, hoping that the conference would be a great success.

couldn't help feeling that here we were, celebrating *EAGLE*'s 30th Birthday, and the two people who had made it all possible had nothing to say to each other. I also had high hopes of other *EAGLE* contributors paying the convention a visit: Ron Embleton, Don Harley, Peter Jackson and John Worsley had all promised to attend if they could. Sadly none did and we missed out on some (possible) panel discussions with questions and answers from the talented quartet of artists. Ron later told me he was "hard pressed on all sides" and could not spare the two days needed to visit London. On the other hand Don, Peter and John all lived within easy reach of the Y Hotel. Still, they all contributed drawings to the souvenir brochure and were not the only ones to miss the weekend.

THE UGLY

They say that success has many parents and failure is an orphan. EAGLECON 80 was a bit of both for me. I could go into detail over the aftermath of the convention but it is all in the past. Enough to say that, in my view, some of us put in a lot of hard work to try to make it a success. I could not help feeling Frank Hampson seemed (to me) very subdued during the week-



Facets of EAGLE (pink pamphlet) was Simon Garrett's attempt to condense some of the best of the publication's most notable items. Keith Page illustrated the cover

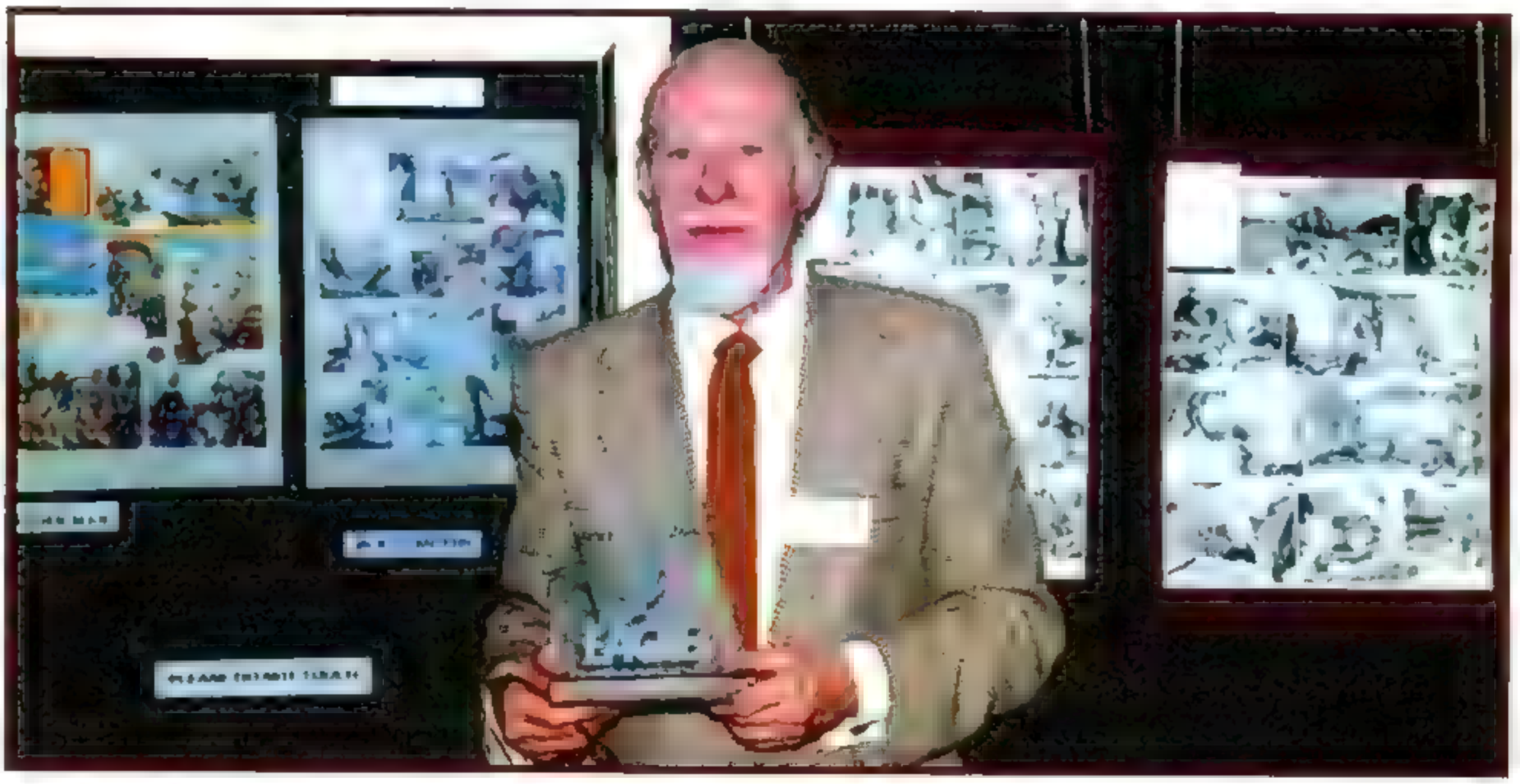
Faces of EAGLE (blue pamphlet) showed all the publication's main characters, in an Andrew Coffey/Simon Garrett collaboration. Andrew provided the cover montage that used Keith Page's logo design at the bottom.

end, but maybe he was feeling ill. Certainly a number of visitors wrote in to say they enjoyed it and Adrian got a glowing letter from Frank. We did have a few critics but nothing is 100% perfect! The fact that I had to transport a number of unsold convention brochures back home points to the fact that we probably over-estimated the number of people attending. After the convention there was a splintering of the *Astral Group* and I was caught up in some rather unpleasant accusations.

Was it all worth it? Well, looking back over those years since and remembering all the wonderful people who came to EAGLECON 80, yes I suppose it was – despite the "ugly" aftermath. I recall how happy Richard Jennings was to get his *EAGLE* Award, how nice it was to meet up with Arthur Roberts after so many years, Keith Watson's "thank you" cartoon to *Astral*, Simon Garrett's thoughtful input, Frank Humphris thanking me for a great time, and having the pleasure of introducing the original Miss Peabody to the audience.

Many of those at EAGLECON 80 have gone but they are certainly not forgotten.

Alan Vince, 2010



Richard Jennings proudly displays his EAGLE award against a background of his Storm Nelson artwork

Notes from my archives of EAGLECON 80

Though I had asked keen photographer Cedric Sloan to cover the event for us, I did collect masses of pictures taken by other people there. Cedric took several dozen rolls of film but only got half a dozen rolls professionally developed before his job as an RUC policeman got dangerous – and the films were the last thing to think about! He died in the Troubles.

We began on the Friday evening with a wine and cheese reception for the Convention's participants and guests. The next day began with Marcus and myself opening the event with short addresses from the stage. Many sessions scheduled over the Saturday and Sunday required the use of a screen mounted on the stage, and some elderly audio-visual equipment operated from a pulpit-like stand.

Talks were given with transparencies on the subjects of 'Luck of the Legion' 'Jack o'Lantern', George Cansdale's 'Natural History' series, the humorous *EAGLE*, ' PC 49', the Cutaway illustrations, and the back page Real-Life Adventures.

We also had panels on '*EAGLE* Readers: Just how much did the *EAGLE* do for its followers?' and 'The *EAGLE* contributions of Frank Bellamy'.

Alan designed and produced a dozen EAGLECON 80 Awards consisting of an etched glass plate mounted at 135 degrees upon a wooden base. The plate design was an *EAGLE* logo below a 1950 – 1980 tag line. These were presented at Saturday evening's convention banquet. We gave these to some *EAGLE* staff including Marcus, Frank, Keith Watson, Richard Jennings, Charles Chilton and Frank Humphris.

Frank Hampson provided 10 double-sized 'front page' boards from the Venus story, and two boards from later adventures. These were displayed in a room allocated to FH and we also had many unpublished Dan Dare paintings there [most of these have now been published in *Eagle Times*].

ARTIST	CHARACTER	NUMBER OF ARTBOARDS
Ron Embleton	Johnny Frog	1
John Worsley	PC 49	4
Richard Jennings	Storm Nelson	4
Keith Watson	Dan Dare	4
Frank Humphris	Riders of the Range [incl Battle of the Big Horn board]	4
Harold Johns	Dan Dare	1
Martin Aitchison	Luck of the Legion	3
Norman Williams	St Patrick/ Lord Nelson	2
Robert Ayton	(2) Jack O'Lantern/ (1) Sir Walter Raleigh	3
David Langdon	Prof. Puff and his dog Wuff	1
John Ryan	(2) Harris Tweed/ (1) Captain Pugwash	3
George Cansdale	Nature Pages	2
Peter Jackson	(2) Marco Polo/ (1) David Livingstone	3
Frank Hampson	Road of Courage + Visual of same	1
Frank Bellamy	Dan Dare	1

The artwork we had on display

Several dealers' stalls for *EAGLE* and similar juvenile publications were provided for, and we arranged a shop for extra copies of our convention publications.

The producer of the Radio City (Liverpool) commercial radio programme contacted me before the event to say what he'd like to do there. On the second day of the convention the producer and his interviewer colleague recorded eight or so brief sound bites and interviews with many participants. These were later edited into a 28 minute Keith Chegwin-narrated programme transmitted during the summer of 1980. At the time there were several TV programmes also based around convention participants. The best were an edition of ITV's *Afternoon Plus* – Frank Hampson, Alan Vince and Roger Bayliss, and an interview with Roger Coombes on the magazine programme *Pebble Mill at One*, audio copies of which have survived in our archive. ❑

Just who were interviewed – and by whom:

INTERVIEWEE(S)	INTERVIEWER(S)
Macdonald Hastings	Andrew Coffey
Charles Chilton with Frank Humphris	Alan Vince
Frank Hampson with Keith Watson	Alan Vince
Chad Varah	David Slinn
Richard Jennings	Eric Fernie and Richard Heagarty

In Part Two I hope that photographs will stand on their own and convey some of the pleasure – and my elation – of that event, where so many stalwarts who produced the Fifties *EAGLE* for us were present.

The Rivals of Jeff Arnold No 9

by Cowhand Horn

As it's Christmas I thought I would look at a light hearted comedy comic cowboy that ran from the fifties to the seventies – *Topper*'s 'Happy Daze' drawn by Bill Holroyd. Bill Holroyd must be the second most prolific artist that D.C. Thomson had on their books behind Dudley D.Watkins.

Bill could draw serious strip cartoon stories such as he did in the *Topper* series 'The Fighting Frasers' and then turn his hand to comedy such as 'Screwy Driver' in the *Dandy* or 'Ding-Dong Belle' in the forties *Beano*.

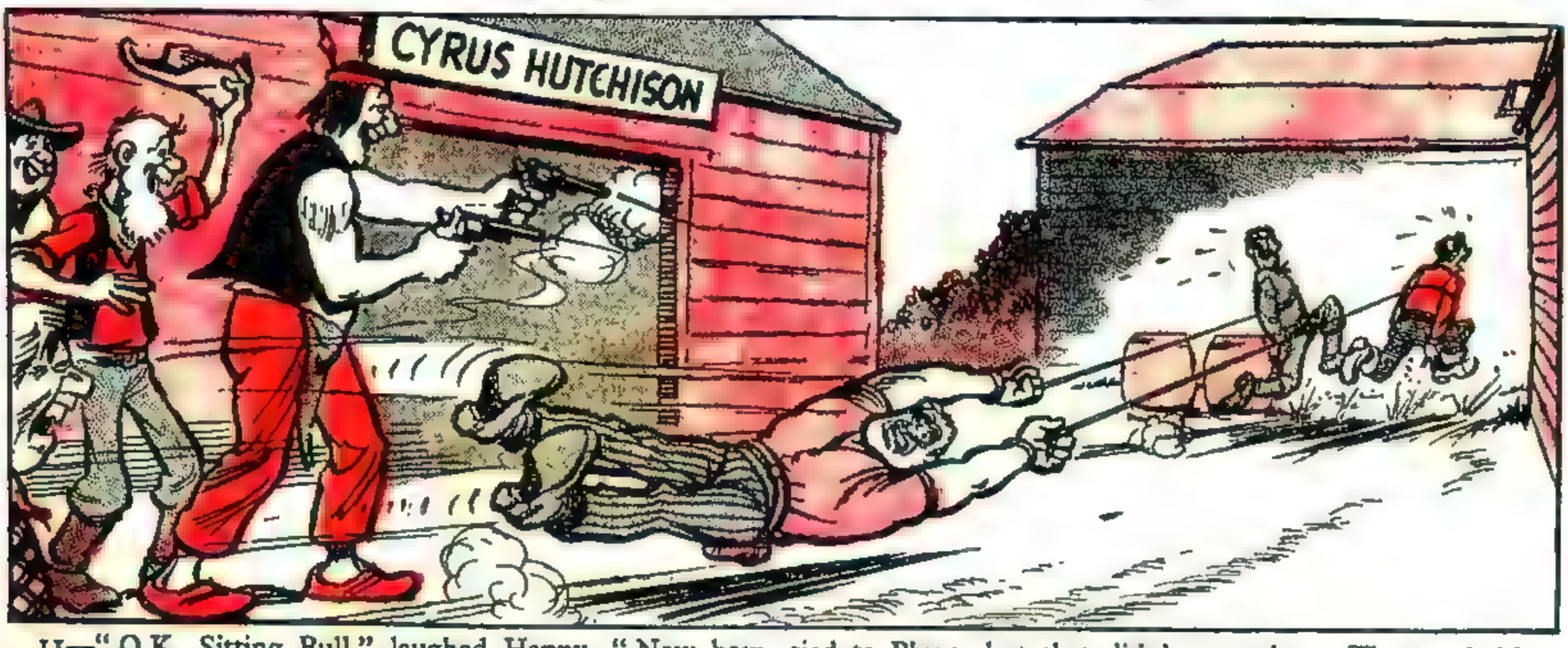
The *Topper* was Thomson's first new comic publication since the war starting on Friday, February 3rd, 1953. The 16 pages, were tabloid size and had a blend of slapstick and educational content. It consisted of full colour pages, and pages in red, black and white. It had a life span of 37 years finishing in 1990.

So what about 'Happy Daze'? The stories were set in the toughest town in the West, Peacefull Creek. No one wanted the Sheriff's job after the last one left hurriedly but old timer Happy Daze was cajoled into it with his friend, the Indian, Sitting Bull.

The strip was not in the usual format of speech balloons on a frame but a commentary sometimes under the frame or, as happened in the later stories, a commentary in the frame. Happy took a whole page up in the comic and his stories would be portrayed in red, black and white. But as anyone with *Topper Books* (they were never titled *Topper Annuals!)* from this period will know, Happy's adventures were in full colour and ran for several pages.

Happy and Sitting Bull would bring criminals to book but not in the usual western way of gunfights. Most arrests came about in the most unconvential way.

One of the secrets of the success of the strip was Bill's drawings of the characters' faces especially if they were on the receiving end of a punch or trap that Happy and Sitting Bull had set. ❑



11—"O K, Sitting Bull," laughed Happy. "Now how about showing our budding sheriff here some real shooting!" tied to Plugg, but that didn't stop them. They took him along—on his back! The whole town hooted as the

This is how Topper readers saw Happy every week - drawn in red, black and white

Happy and Sitting Bull bring the outlaws in but not in the usual manner.

Illustrations from Topper Books

PC49 and the Case of Christmas Presents

Archie was sitting in Joan's flat and although Christmas was only three days away he was not happy.

"You know, that's the second year in a row that I have to work on Christmas Eve. Some lucky chaps have had their days off to coincide with Christmas Eve, Christmas Day or Boxing Day, but not me. Our shifts have moved too - I'm on 4 pm till 12."

Joan, who was preparing lunch in the kitchen, heard his moans and called out "Oh, stop whingeing, Archie. You know the station is down on manpower thanks to the flu. Be grateful that you will spend most of Christmas Day in good health."

"Well, that's the second year you'll be spending Christmas Eve on your own" the moaner continued.

"Oh don't worry about me. I'm spending the evening with old Mrs Walsh down the corridor. It will be her first Christmas on her own since she lost her husband, Herbert, and I've promised to go with her to Midnight Mass at St. Mark's Church like they used to do together."

Archie softened. "Yes, they were a nice old couple. But I suppose there will be many people in that position this Christmas."

"Well there you are. Be thankful we have each other. And don't you dare come round after your shift. Go to bed at the flophouse or you'll be fit for nothing on Christmas Day." ordered Joan as she walked into the lounge with a plate of sandwiches.

"Hmm" thought Archie. "That's me sorted!"

* * * * * *

At 9 o'clock on Christmas Eve, Archie was on duty and walking down the residential area of Darcy Avenue. The houses along the avenue were fully detached with large gardens in front of the gabled windows and oak doors. Some trees in the avenue cast shadows from the street lighting along the road.

Fortynine was thinking of all the excited children in the houses as he walked along but he was smartly brought down to earth when out from behind a large ivy-clad tree stepped someone dressed as Father Christmas. Archie could see, even in the dim street light, that the whiskers on the face of this gentleman were genuine and tidy.

Constable! You're just the man I need. Can you help me?"

The voice was cultured, although there was perhaps a hint of a foreign accent there.

Composing himself Fortynine said " Hello there sir, I'll try to be of some help. What's the problem?"

"Well, in my drive is a large box. It's my daughter's Christmas present. It's not heavy but bulky and awkward. Could you help me to get it into the garage, please?"

"Certainly, sir, but how did you get it into the drive in the first place?"

"Oh, the shop in the high street had a service where they guaranteed to deliver large presents to anyone in the area on Christmas Eve to avoid having to store them ourselves until the big day. The van driver was in such a rush to get round that he left it on the drive."

The two men walked up the path, passing the shrubs on each side, and there stood the box. Archie noticed the brass number on the door, "Oh, Fifty-nine - ten more than me," he thought.

Archie didn't like to ask what was in the box but all over it was the logo of "Zeto Instruments".

"Father Christmas" produced the key to the garage and opened up the door. "Right, young man," he said. "You take that end."

Gradually the box was moved to the garage floor and both men stood upright again.

"Thanks very much, Constable. I'm most grateful. Are you from Primrose Hill station?" he asked.

"I am. Police Constable Archibald Berkeley-Willoughby, or PC49, at your service, sir."

"Father Christmas" extended his hand. "And I'm Henri Zeto at your service, Constable. A very Merry Christmas to you. You policemen have it hard at Christmas don't you? Do you get much time with your family?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't do too badly. I manage to have a Christmas dinner with my fiancée," came the answer.

"Well, I won't keep you. All the very best, young man."

With a wave, Archie bid the old man "Good night, sir. Merry Christmas"

* * * * * *

At 12.05 a.m. Archie walked into the station to sign off. His shift had passed very quietly, to his amazement. He greeted Sergeant Phillips on desk-duty with: "Merry Christmas, Sarge. Has the world been at peace during the night ?"

"Not quite, Archie. Someone has stolen the bust of the late Mayor, Tom Price, from the town centre. The current mayor phoned Wilson to do something about it, although I suspect drunken yobbos are responsible."

"Mayor Tom Price?" said Fortynine. "Let me see, wasn't he the youngest mayor ever elected in the town who went on to be a P.O.W. in the war and escaped back to England only to be killed later in the war."

"That's him," said the Sergeant.

After some thought Archie said: "Hey, guess what, Sarge? I met Santa Claus in Darcy Avenue. Some old

boy, dressed up in full Father Christmas attire, stopped me to help him into his garage with a large box."

"Oh, what number was that? Darcy Avenue is not too far from me."

"Fiftynine," replied Fortynine.

"That's funny. Fiftynine is vacant, so I wouldn't think it was that house. My neighbour's wife used to do some cleaning there for the owner, a business man, but he moved out."

"Odd" thought Fortynine. "I'm sure that was the number."

* * * * * *

Going back to the flop house, Archie made a detour along Darcy Avenue. "Just to prove I'm not going mad" he said to himself.

Shortly, Archie was in the avenue. Fiftynine looked very quiet with no movement at all. He wandered up the path and tried the garage door. Locked! He noticed the curtains were open and so he pressed his nose against the window pane and by the help of the street light he could see the room was empty!

"What is going on here?" thought Archie.

He walked around the back. Lying on the back lawn was a youth asleep. At his side was the bust of the late mayor. From the many footprints in the soil and on the lawn it looked as though more than one person had been involved in the theft of the bust.

Archie gave the youth a shake. "Come on you, get up."

With a moan the body came to life and with a slur said: "Go away. Leave me alone." It was obvious the lad was totally drunk.

Archie let him lie there and shot off down the road to the phone box on the corner. He arranged back-up to come and deal with his find. Smartly he returned to No. 59 and waited for the police van.

Back at the station, as the youth was being charged at the desk, D.I. Wilson walked out of his office, ready for his Christmas holiday.

"Well done, Fortynine," shouted Wilson, "You've saved my Christmas Day."

Sergeant Phillips called out to Archie also. "Before you go, Fortynine, there's a parcel for you. It was left during my break"

With great care, Archie took the parcel and opened it. Inside were two long and narrow boxes both wrapped in Christmas paper. The message on one gift read "Happy Christmas, Fortynine". The other box, exactly the same size, also had a message – "Happy Christmas to Fortynine's fiancée."

"I don't understand this," he thought. He opened "his" present. It was a Zeto watch!

* * * * * *

Later that day, Archie joined Joan for Christmas dinner, taking with him the mystery gift. Just as baffled, Joan opened it and found inside the Christmas paper, a lady's Zeto watch.

"Golly! These aren't cheap watches," was all she could say.

Later that afternoon, as Archie and Joan slept off the Christmas Dinner in the armchairs there came a knock on the door. It was Mrs. Walsh. She had a mystery! She had found resting on her doorway a Christmas gift ; no mention who it was from, but on opening it she had found a lady's Zeto watch.

* * * * * *

Six months later D.I. Wilson was in his office reading the obituaries in the local paper.

"Did you know Henri Zeto, the watch maker?" he asked Sergeant Wright.

"No, sir. Don't think so," came the reply.

"Hmm. Not surprising. He had a small unit on the Burbrige Industrial Estate in C Division although he lived in Darcy Avenue on our patch. His brothers ran a watch factory in Switzerland and Henri came over here to run a sales and marketing operation. Henri liked it here and stayed. He was a very secretive man and no one knew much about his business but at the age of eightyfive, he decided to go home and retire. He's now passed on leaving a wife and one daughter.

I met him once at a charity dinner. He and his wife were members of St. Mark's Church and last Christmas, before he left, he gave all the old-age pensioners who were members of the church a watch, quite anonymously. Dressed as Father Christmas, he planted the watches when the old folks were at Midnight Mass.

He phoned me on the morning of Christmas Eve to say what he was doing and worried that he may be arrested for loitering around properties, but we had no complaints."

* * * * * *

The recipients of the watches put them down to Father Christmas – but Archie knew different!

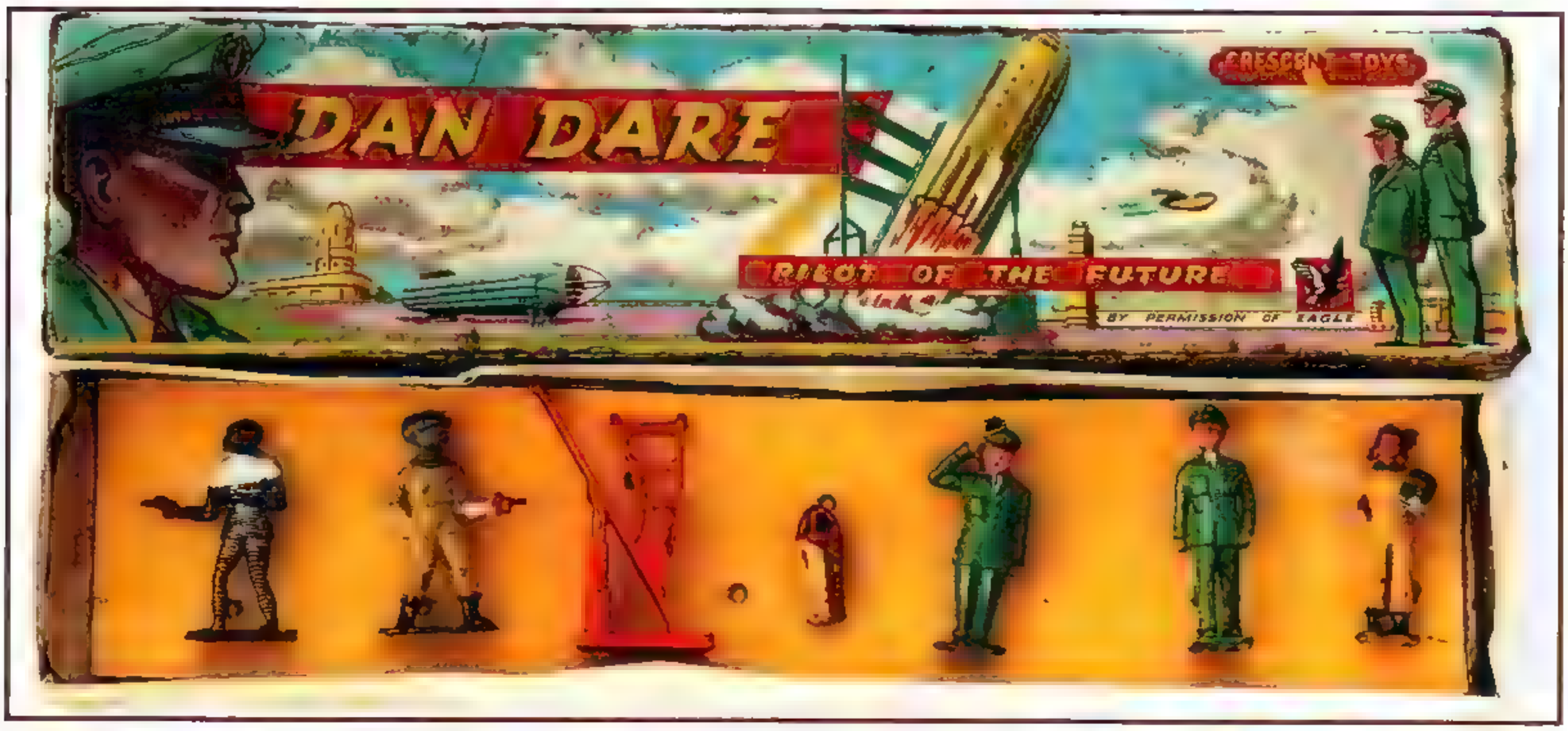
DAN DARE Figures Part 1

by Ted Herbert

Crescent Toy Company

The very first set of Dan Dare figures – and the most evocative – was produced by the Crescent Toy Company in the early 1950s. Contained in an attractive box, it consisted of die-cast metal figures of Sir Hubert Guest (identifiable from his grey moustache), Sondar, a launching ramp in orange or green, a tiny little space ship in red and yellow that fitted on the ramp, Professor Peabody, Digby and Dan Dare himself (see illustration below). The launching ramp suffered from brittleness due to lead disease and broke very easily. Crescent Toys (1922-1980), founded by Henry Eagles and Arthur Schneider, was so-called as the company was located initially at 67 De Beauvoir Crescent, Kingston Road, London, N1. The set cost five shillings when it was brought out; one mint and boxed set was recently sold by Christies for the unbelievable price of £1,560.

Crescent Toys subsequently used some of the figures, painted blue, in a US Air Force series in which Sir Hubert Guest's ray gun is cunningly converted into a fuel hose. Eagle-eyed members will doubtless point out that Dan Dare and Digby did actually appear in a blue uniform in the 1961 *Eagle Annual* (No 10).



Dan Dare and Digby in blue uniforms in the 1961 Eagle Annual No 10

Crescent Toys: USAF set re-using some of the Dan Dare figures (Dan, Digby and Sir Hubert)

Eaglewall Plastics/Kentoys

An innovative set of plastic Dan Dare figures was brought out in the late fifties. They were designed by George Erik and produced by Eaglewall Plastics Ltd. of 62, West Street, Dorking, Surrey (see *Eagle Times*, Autumn 1998 and Summer 2010, for descriptions of the plastic aircraft and ship kits produced by this firm). The distributor was Guiterman & Co. Ltd. of 37 Soho Square, London W1. The six main figures, in standard 54mm scale, were: Dan Dare (with a moveable right arm holding a space gun), Digby, Commander Lex O'Malley, Flamer Spry, Sir Hubert Guest, and Professor Peabody. Being made of flexible plastic, the paint easily flaked off these figures and they are almost always seen in poor condition. The ends of the weapons are also rather fragile. They were sold at a shilling each from a large carton of three dozen assorted figures, with excellent Dan Dare graphics.

When Eaglewall Plastics Ltd. went bankrupt after a serious fire and other difficulties, the surviving moulds were sold to Kentoys, one of the smaller toy soldier makers of the time. It was started in London in the 1950s by a Mr. Hall, who owned a shop in Kenway Road called Kenway Cycles. The designer was Norman Tooth, the Technical Director for Timpo Toys at the time. The Dan Dare figures are very hard to find these days and when you do find one it is difficult to tell whether it is the Kentoys' version or an Eaglewall original. In March, 2009 five of the figures sold for £200 at Vectis Auctions.

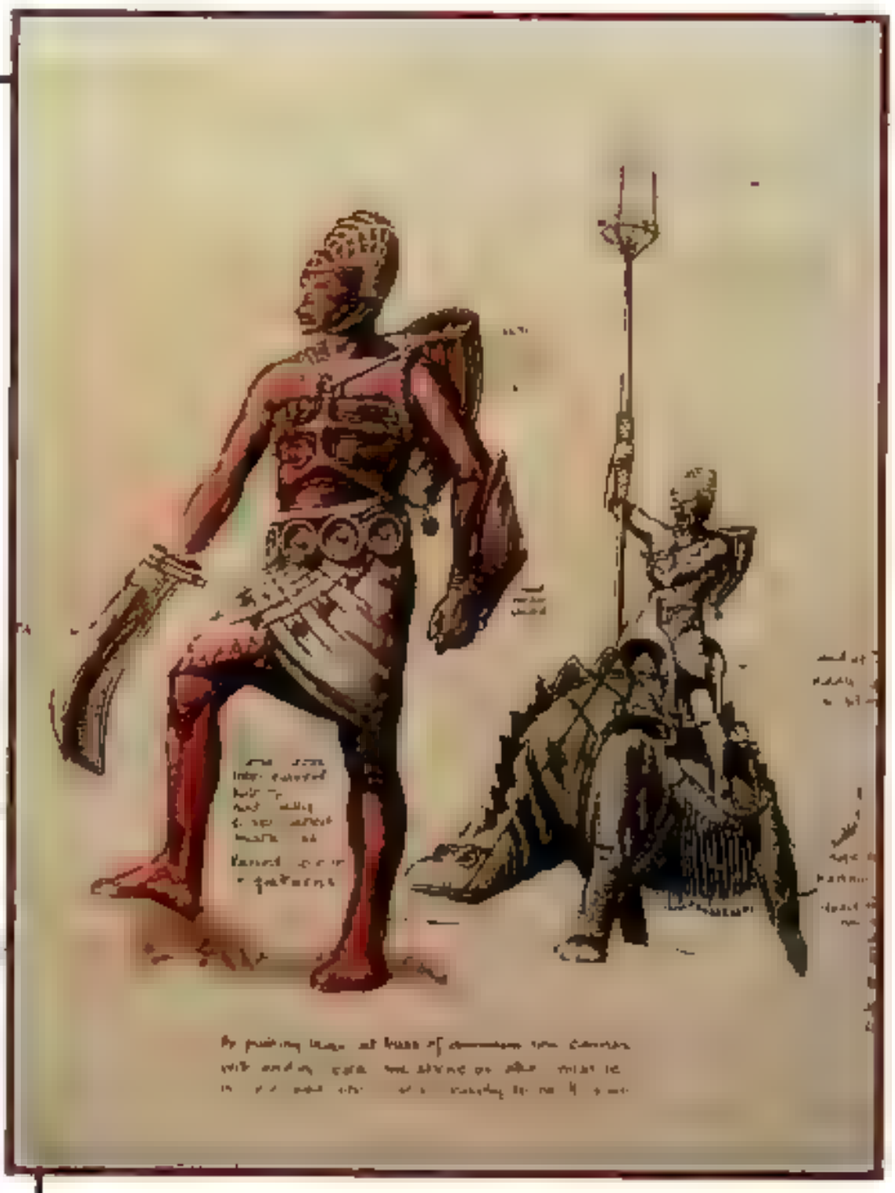
The six main Eaglewall/Kentoys characters

The Eaglewall/Kentoys United Nations Police Commandos

As something of an afterthought, three United Nations Police Commandos were also produced. These were in combat poses, including a crawling trooper with a pistol/ray gun and a bandaged head. George Erik used the same pose in the REAMSA range for an almost identical First World War Turk and a US Cavalryman. However, the UN Police Commandos shown in a frame on the inside front cover of *EAGLE* for 17th August, 1951 (Volume 2, No. 19) have a light beige uniform rather than the dark khaki of the Eaglewall troopers. These three figures are extremely rare. In fact I have only ever seen a single set, sold at a Phillips auction in London for £90 some twenty years ago.

United Nations Police Commandos, EAGLE 17th August, 1951

George Erik also designed a set of three Aztecs for Kentoys, with the same square base as the Dan Dare figures. These have a remarkably similar form of dress to the aliens in Terra Nova (see the front-page illustration of Terra Novans in *EAGLE* Volume 10, No. 27) and they may originally have been intended as further figures for the Dan Dare series but were hijacked for other purposes en route. According to *Plastic Warrior*, No. 54, James Opie, an expert on old toy soldiers, has a set of these Aztecs and regards their acquisition as his biggest-ever collecting coup. **To be continued** ❑



The Kentoys Aztecs and their similarity to the Terra Novans . The figure on the left even seems to be carrying a cesta in his right hand and a stone carrier on his back

To follow in part 2:

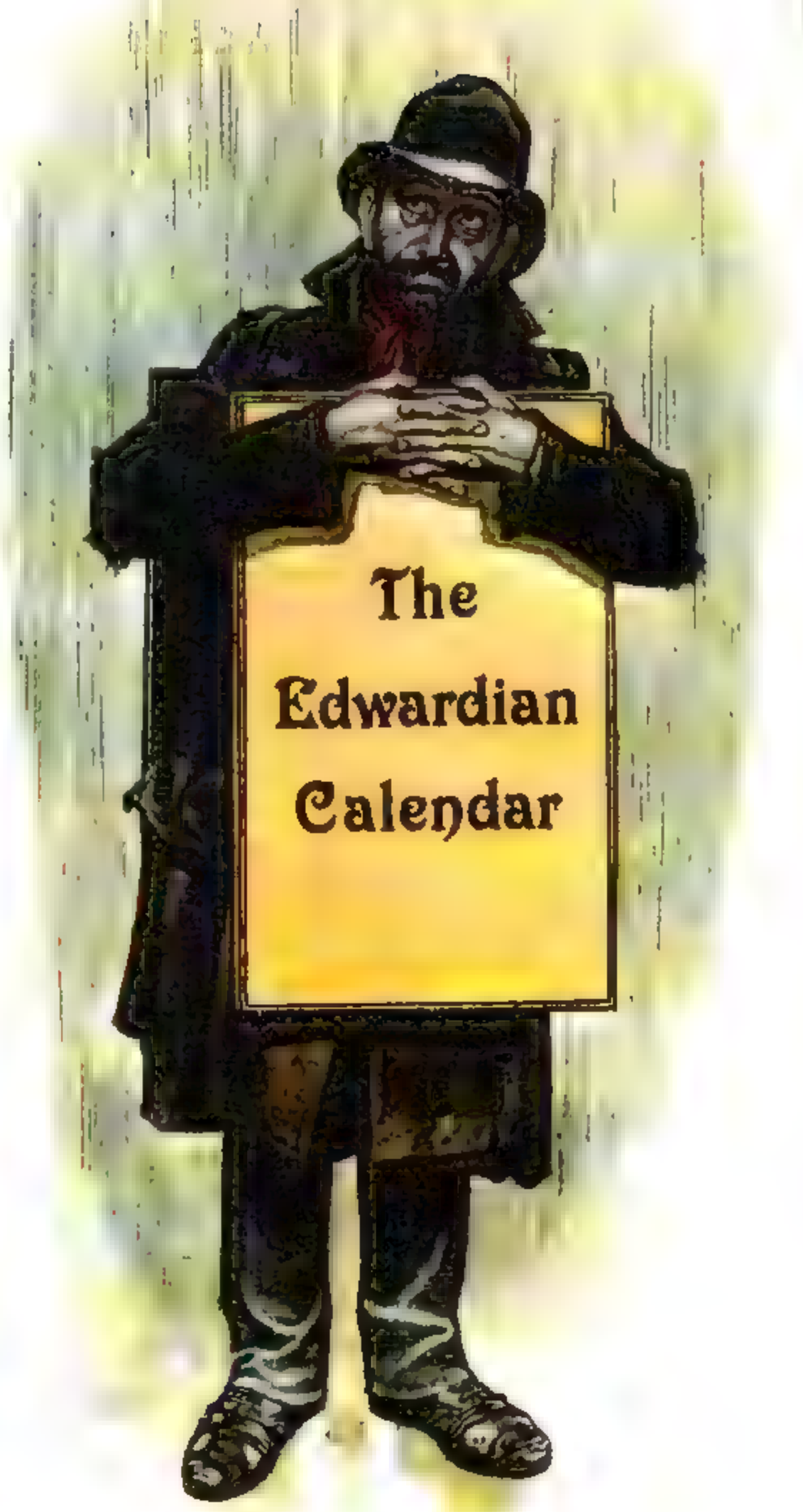
- Southall/Britains
- Mettoy Playthings
- Unicorn Miniatures
- other manufacturers

Ron by Ron

by Alan Vince

For the greater part of his career as a strip illustrator and painter Ron Embleton was well known for his adventure stories and factual recreations of historical events, from his stunning black and white strips 'Don O' the Drums', 'Strongbow the Mighty' and 'Johnny Frog' to the full colour pages of 'Wulf The Briton', 'Wrath of the Gods' and 'Stingray'. Here, Alan Vince takes a light hearted look at Ron's more humorous work aimed at the artist himself.

An illustration from a strip in which Ron put himself



A self portrait for this calendar

At the early age of nine Ron Embleton sent a political cartoon to a well known newspaper and by the age of eleven had a thriving Christmas card business going. He won a national poster competition at the age of twelve so a career in art seemed a natural choice for him. The only other careers that the young Ron had in mind were playing football or becoming a cowboy. He was put off the former when his father started watching him and the latter was out of the question.

Ron and his wife Liz had been childhood sweethearts and Liz recalled one day at school when a certain female teacher was annoyed with Ron's apparent lack of interest in her lesson. The young

Ron's pear-shaped view of himself from Ultima Thule

An early self-portrait from the Ray Reagan comic

FILM PRODUCERS HAVE NEVER REALIZED MY FULL POTENTIAL! THE PARTS I COULD HAVE PLAYED— WRECK BUTLER IN GONE WITH THE WIND, LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, AND I COULD'VE MADE A BETTER JOB OF SPARTACUS THAN KIRK DOUGLAS DID!

HOW ABOUT DOROTHY IN THE WIZARD OF OZ?

Self-portrait on a piece of card used as a stiffener for some photographs he sent me

A drawing for the cover of the SSI Newsletter. He thought strips should be taken more seriously!

Embleton was busy drawing – not during an art lesson - and the teacher asked to see his effort. When she saw it was a portrait of herself, and a very good one at that, her anger cooled and all was forgiven. As Liz witnessed, all through their life together, Ron just loved drawing anything and everything.

During his National Service he was posted to Malaya at the time of the emergency but still found time to sketch the locals and develop his skills.

Selling his first strip cartoon aged just seventeen, Ron spent most of the fifties drawing all kinds of strips. He continued this type of work into the sixties but by now was getting more and more "serious" work, having been elected a member of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters and Sculptors. Being a fast worker Ron was able to combine both types of commission and meet the all-important deadlines – even if it did result in him getting rings around his eyes.

Ron drew himself for this illustration from the book Hadrian's Wall in the Days of the Romans. The caption read: "One of the men who built the wall"

Another illustration from a strip in which Ron put himself

One field of strip work Ron really wanted to get into was the adult market. He had sent some ideas to various magazines and in 1973 was asked by *Penthouse* owner Bob Guccione to illustrate 'Oh Wicked Wanda'. Ron had been familiar with *Playboy's* Little Annie Fanny and he wanted to upstage it. He did, from 1973 to 1981, following that epic with Sweet Chastity from 1981 to 1988.

He had the time of his life on Wanda and often wrote his own additions to the strip when Fred Mullally's script didn't fill enough pages.

While he would be cruel to the celebs he featured in *Penthouse* pages Ron was no less flattering to himself. He made many guest appearances in Wanda, usually as a misunderstood or ill-treated artist. He would also make his own nose a much more prominent feature than in real life. He would even put Bob Guccione into the strip, with his lady friend, and have them saying unkind things about the artist. It was all part of Ron's outlook on life and he had a lot of fun doing it. ❑

Eagle Annuals 1971-1975

A review by Jon Johnson

The *EAGLE* comic officially finished with the issue dated 26th April, 1969 and readers were advised to take *Lion* in future as the adventures of 'Dan Dare' would continue in that publication.

However, the following week, readers of *Lion* would find only a black and white 'Dan Dare' reprint story from 1959. It didn't last long but there were official *Eagle Annuals* for 1969 and 1970 (reviewed in the Christmas *Eagle Times* of 2010).

Eagle Annuals continued until 1975, still keeping their own name, and were not part of a combined "*Lion and Eagle Annual*".

The 1971 annual was a typical IPC annual; standard size, quite colourful but printed on poor paper. Although there were some interesting articles in the book, it was far away from what children of the 1950s would remember. 'Dan Dare' was there, drawn by Eric Eden, but nothing else had lasted from the fifties.

The annual has some photos, something the fifties annuals never had, and these accompany articles on sport, oil production, and film stuntmen. We had one cutaway; a dragster car and a couple of true historical happenings mixed with several picture strip stories. We had two World War 2 strips, 'The Fall of Constantinople', and a story of explorers looking for 'The Lost City of the Incas'. Ron Embleton has two pieces, a colour story of the Wild West and a drop in picture about the first crossing of Australia. Planes, and boats and trains were also featured. The cover, front and back, shows two high powered speedboats flashing through a sheet of flame.

On to the 1972 annual. Once again this has identical pictures on the front and back covers: a First World War air dogfight. Dan Dare and the Mekon have a coloured eight page story called 'The Mekon Menace', artist uncredited.

Four poorly draw picture strips are included but good artwork comes from Ron Embleton who drew the inner front cover picture of two frontiersmen shooting the rapids in an indian canoe. Ashwell Wood's drawing of Nelson's ship, *The Victory* was reprinted from a 1960s *EAGLE*. Another cutaway artist from *EAGLE*, John Batchelor, has a two page article on the Gloster Gladiator airplane. Plenty of other planes, boats and trains are in other articles.

Photos of footballers are shown and there are several articles on historical events such as 'The Life of Nelson' and the shot that started the First World War. The price of this annual: 70p.

The following year saw a cover with a two man mini-submarine on the front and back. On page four we have the start of a nine page 'Dan Dare' story called 'The Planet of Peril'. The Mekon appears but only from afar as he sends Dan and Dig on a death mission to a deadly planet by a false radio message. The two spacemen encounter large "Enid Blyton" type mushrooms and a wild animal with wings but they escape as usual.

The rest of the annual contains a mixed bag. A twelve-page strip in orange, black and white tells the story of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce indians. Another strip in blue, back and white relates a story from the American Civil War while another tells of an Australian group of soldiers who are attacked by ants; and that is it for strips!

An interesting colour article looks at the old biplanes while another colour section looks at racing cars. Plenty of sport, including the life of Pele.

The 1974 annual has a colour photo of the Concorde on the cover. Jim Baikie drew the eight page 'Dan Dare' story called 'The Space Poachers' which has two characters who are poaching minerals on a star fragment. Dan and Dig sort them out. There are only five strips including one about a race to stop an atom bomb going off. Plenty of sports including a look at some stories about the football world cup and an ice hockey story.

The final *EAGLE* annual, 1975, has on the cover a Nazi bomber flying over London's Tower Bridge, drawn by Epton. The unnamed and uncredited 'Dan Dare' story fills eight pages and again we have only three other strips to go with it. The inside cover has a double colour photo of a speedway race and in the annual we have a five page article about the sport. There is a poor cutaway of an airliner being refuelled; the artist is not credited. There is a factual article about space travel and what we can expect "in the next ten years". 'The Bandit Buster' is a strip about a bomber crew during the Second World War and is probably the reason for the cover.

There were no more *EAGLE* annuals until the eighties! ❑

EAGLE
ANNUAL 1971
INSIDE THE INCREDIBLE LAIR OF THE MEKON
So that's the Mekon! I'll blast him to atomised dust
Don't waste your time lad – that's only a Three-D picture of himself he's projected here
So we meet again Dare! But it's not you I would speak with – but your important passenger Sir Henry Drew
You have seen one example of my powers to create space accidents – or avoid them – Look at the vision screen and see another Watch that planet – and the meteor
EAGLE
ANNUAL 1972
EAGLE
ANNUAL 1973
EAGLE
ANNUAL 1974
Take off for a journey into a world of adventure
EAGLE
1975
FOOTBALL NOTHING! THIS IS A REAL OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS PUD! I HAD IT MADE SPECIALLY. I'VE BEEN DREAMING OF TUCKING INTO THIS GASTRONOMIC MASTERPIECE!
IT LOOKS GREAT, DIG? AND WITH IT WRAPPED LIKE THAT, IT SHOULD KEEP TILL WE GET BACK TO BASE!

Dan Dare and the Mekon Menace (1972)

Digby's Christmas Pudding (1975)

'Sammy' in Colour

by Will Grenham

In *Eagle Times* Vol. 23 No. 4 (Winter 2010) Jeremy Briggs took a look at 'Sammy in Space' - the strip in *EAGLE*'s companion paper *Swift* that was drawn by 'Dan Dare' artists Bruce Cornwell and Desmond Walduck, and drew heavily on the imagery of 'Dan Dare'. He also provided a full Stripography of 'Sammy in Space', which was published in two issues of *Eagle Times* (Vol. 24 Nos. 1 and 2). As Jeremy reported in his article, before becoming 'Sammy in Space', the 'Sammy' strip had started in 1954 (with a different artist) as 'Sammy and his Speedsub'. In Holland some of the 'Sammy' strips were later reprinted in *Arend* - where "Sammy" became "Rob".

Around the time that Jeremy was providing the articles on 'Sammy on Space' and L. Ashwell Wood for *Eagle Times*, he sent in "something extra that you might want to use in relation to the Sammy piece". John Swan had been helping him on the foreign reprints side of his articles and "one of the things that he [John Swan] came up with was one of the 'Sammy and his Speedsub' single page strips in both its original *Swift* and in the Dutch *Arend*. The unusual thing here being that *Arend* coloured the original black and white strip".

Jeremy suggested that reproduction of these pages might be an interesting feature for *Eagle Times*.

'Sammy' as it appeared in Swift Vol. 2 No. 17 (23rd April, 1955) - Artist unknown

'Rob' in colour in Arend Vol. 3 No. 38 (21st June, 1958)

He then went on to suggest: "I suppose there is even the potential to re-letter the Dutch version into English and present a colour 'Sammy and his Speedsub'. My photo-editing software isn't up to lifting the English text out of the *Swift* version and inserting it in the *Arend* version to make a colour English version but that would be a possibility if you knew someone who could."

Liking a challenge, I offered to "do a Photoshop®" to make an English colour version as Jeremy had suggested. (Actually I used Photoshop® Elements, rather than full-blown Photoshop®.)

The job proved to be trickier than just swapping the text in the speech balloons, since the Dutch translator had also changed the "sound effects" ("Bons!" for "Bump!", "Zoef!!" for "Zoom!", "Woesj!" for "Z-zip!" and "Kling!" for "Klang!") and "Sammy and his Speedsub" was now "Rob en zŷn wonderboot" - and all this text appeared over the colour image, rather than in the speech bubbles. Nevertheless I persevered.

Having restored the English text, I took the liberty of trying to "improve" the colour, in particular removing the discolouration of the "white" paper background and making small adjustments to the balance and saturation of the other colours. The final version is shown opposite.

SAMMY AND HIS SPEEDSUB

BUMP!

Gosh! That pipe wasn't loaded on the lorry properly!

That's dangerous! It's blocking the railway line!

An express train is due through any minute now. I've just got to get that pipe off the line!

Now if I can only knock it off with my grabbers...

Oh! I didn't hit it properly – and here comes the train!

ZOOM!

CLANG!

I can't warn the driver in time I must get that pipe off the line!

Z-ZIP!

Phew! I've done it – and just in the nick of time!

Thanks to John Swan for finding and making available the original copies of *Swift* and *Arend* and Jeremy Briggs for setting the challenge and providing the scans.

David Motton

by James Howard

David Motton has just retired at the age of 79. For the past 16 years he has held the position of maintenance man and night porter at the George Hotel in Swaffham, Norfolk.

Previously he worked in a nursery at Methwold for ten years and also worked on the old Swaffham dog track.

But it is as a strip cartoon writer that he is best known to us, for David wrote the 'Dan Dare' stories during the sixties.

Born in White Hart Lane, London, in 1932, David was evacuated to Northampton and Kent during the war and finished his education at The Stationers' School in London. Two years of National Service followed. He served in the Education Corps teaching English to Kenyans and Ugandans, and one of his pupils was Idi Amin, later to become president of Uganda.

He rather fancied the idea of journalism as a career and his father introduced him to Leonard Matthews, who gave him a job of sub-editor on the *Sun* comic in 1953. The job started by production work and chasing copy but gradually David started to write stories for the comics in the Amalgamated Press stable. He wrote the script for 'Jet Ace Logan' in *Tiger* and *Comet* and 'The Happy Hussar' in the *Sun*.

In the late fifties, David went freelance and was asked by Leonard Matthews if he would like to edit *EAGLE* but he said he would rather work independently. Matthews then told him that they wanted a fresh approach for 'Dan Dare' scripts in *EAGLE* and would he be interested? Writing for a character who had featured on the front page of *EAGLE* for 13 years was a bit daunting but he accepted and set to and submitted his scripts to Val Holding, the editor, for comment and approval. His first story was 'Operation Earthsaver' which he submitted on January 24th, 1962.

He continued with 'Dan Dare' until the reprints came in and then went on to work for *Bunty* and *Debbie*. He considered girls' comics required a better storyline and were more demanding than boys' stories. He also wrote many books and annual stories including *Fireball XL5*; so many he can't remember which ones.

While still employed in this capacity, he and his wife visited the Norfolk seaside town of Swaffham. They liked the area very much and decided to move there. This was in 1981; but four years later the writing had declined with the loss of so many comics and so David said goodbye to comics and took a nursery job in Methwold. All his scripts, thousands of them, are carefully preserved in cardboard boxes at his home; all in episode order.

David was very popular at the George Hotel and the management are making their own tribute to him by setting up a David Motton Corner which will be an exhibition of his scripts and the comics he wrote for. He hopes to do talks on his career and is taking advice and help on public speaking.

But his writing career is not over. He is currently writing a murder mystery set in Norfolk. ❑

David at the George Hotel

Writing for Sun comic

David Motton with a copy of The Eagle comic in which his Dan Dare stories appeared.

EAGLE AND BOYS

6 February 1965 Vol. 16 No. 6

DAN DARE

Pilot of the Future

IN THE MUSHROOM

Dan Dare and Digby were in a s
Treen escape capsule, but could not tran
to the *Anastasia* because Digby had
space-suit. The capsule did not h
enough power to reach Earth . . .

DAN DARE LOOKED AT THE ALIEN TREEN CONTROLS. SOME HE UNDERSTOOD, OTHERS HE DID NOT!

ONE OF THESE KNOBS MIGHT SEND OUT A SIGNAL—BUT I DARE NOT RISK CHOOSING THE WRONG ONE, AND PERHAPS DISCHARGING ALL OUR AIR!

IT'S A PITY THERE'S NO WAY OF TRIGGERING THE ANNIE'S DISTRESS SYSTEM!

YOU'VE HIT IT, DIGBY! THERE IS A WAY OF TRIGGERING THE ANASTASIA'S SIGNALS!

THEN DAN SWITCHED IN THE MAGNETIC MOTORS—A SYSTEM ALMOST UNIQUE TO THERON SHIPS AND THE ANASTASIA! THERE WAS A COMFORTING LURCH AS THE NEW POWER SYSTEM TOOK OVER...

WE'RE ON MAGNETIC—NOW LET'S TRY THE CONTROLS!

THIS HEAT AND THE HOLDING RAY MAY BE A DEFENCE AGAINST NORMAL SPACESHIPS ON NORMAL IMPULSE MOTORS! I'M GOING TO STOP THEM AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

IMPULSE MOTORS OUT!

IT WAS A DESPERATE CHANCE...

IF WE CAN SMASH THE MAIN ELECTRONIC CONTROL SYSTEM, AN AUTOMATIC 'MAYDAY' WILL BE SENT OUT!

YOU MEAN WE'RE GOING TO DAMAGE THE ANASTASIA?

L. ASHWELL WOOD CUTAWAY MAESTRO

by Jeremy Briggs

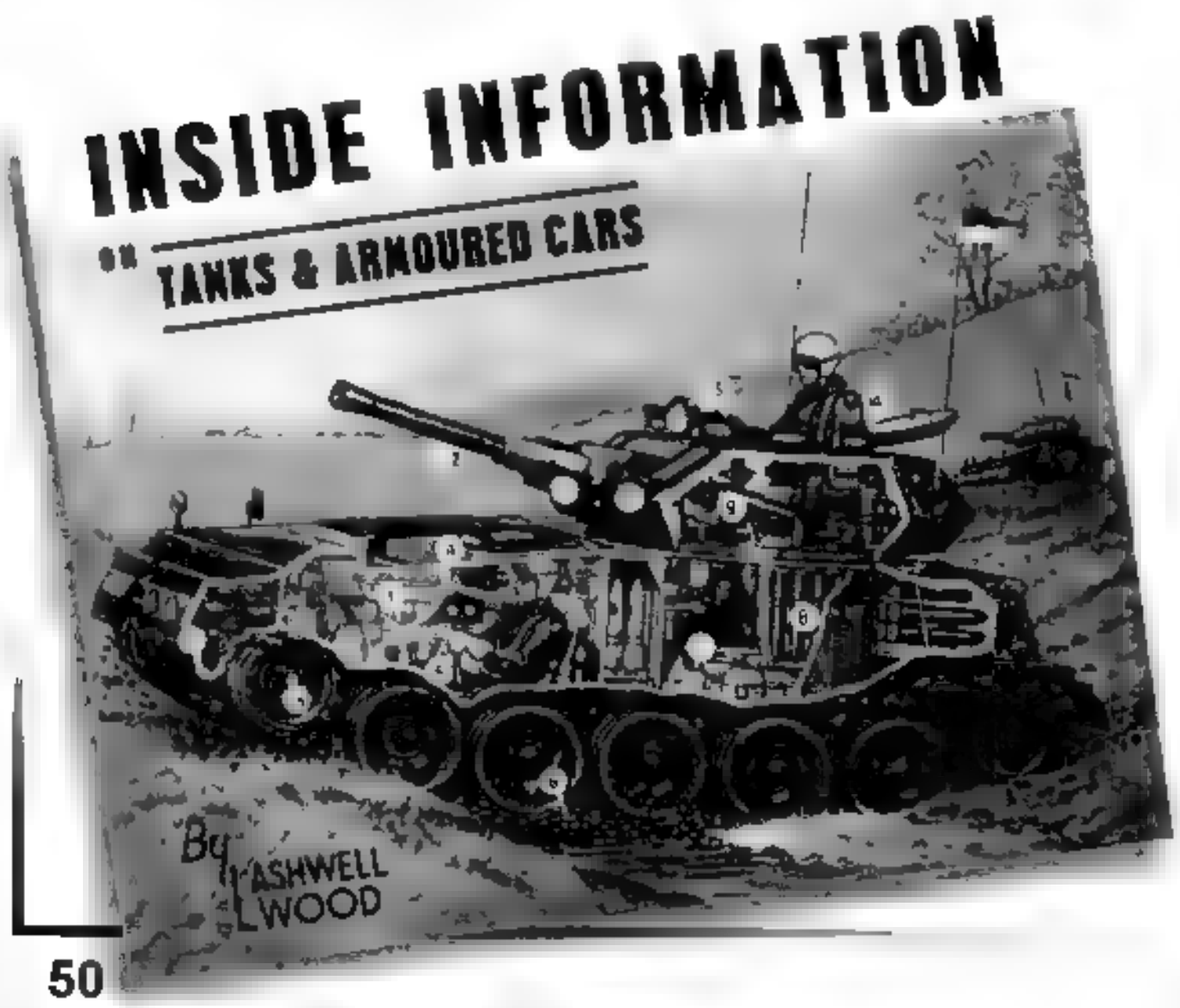
Addendum

Editor's Note: Due to lack of space in the previous issue of *Eagle Times*, a number "box outs" provided by Jeremy were omitted from his article. This Addendum covers the publication of Ashwell Wood illustrations in the *Inside Information* series, Odhams' books, and in foreign publications.

INSIDE INFORMATION

These 8in x 6in landscape format hardback books published by Benwig Books were aimed at children and were all written and illustrated by Wood, who was also the owner of the company. Each book has 8 single-page and 1 two-page cutaways in colour plus 2 b&w illustrations, all newly produced for each book. The books were published in three batches of four as seen from the dates given. Collectors should be aware that the rarity of the books increases with the batches, the first batch being the easiest to find and the third batch being the most difficult. At least three of the first batch titles were also released in softcover.

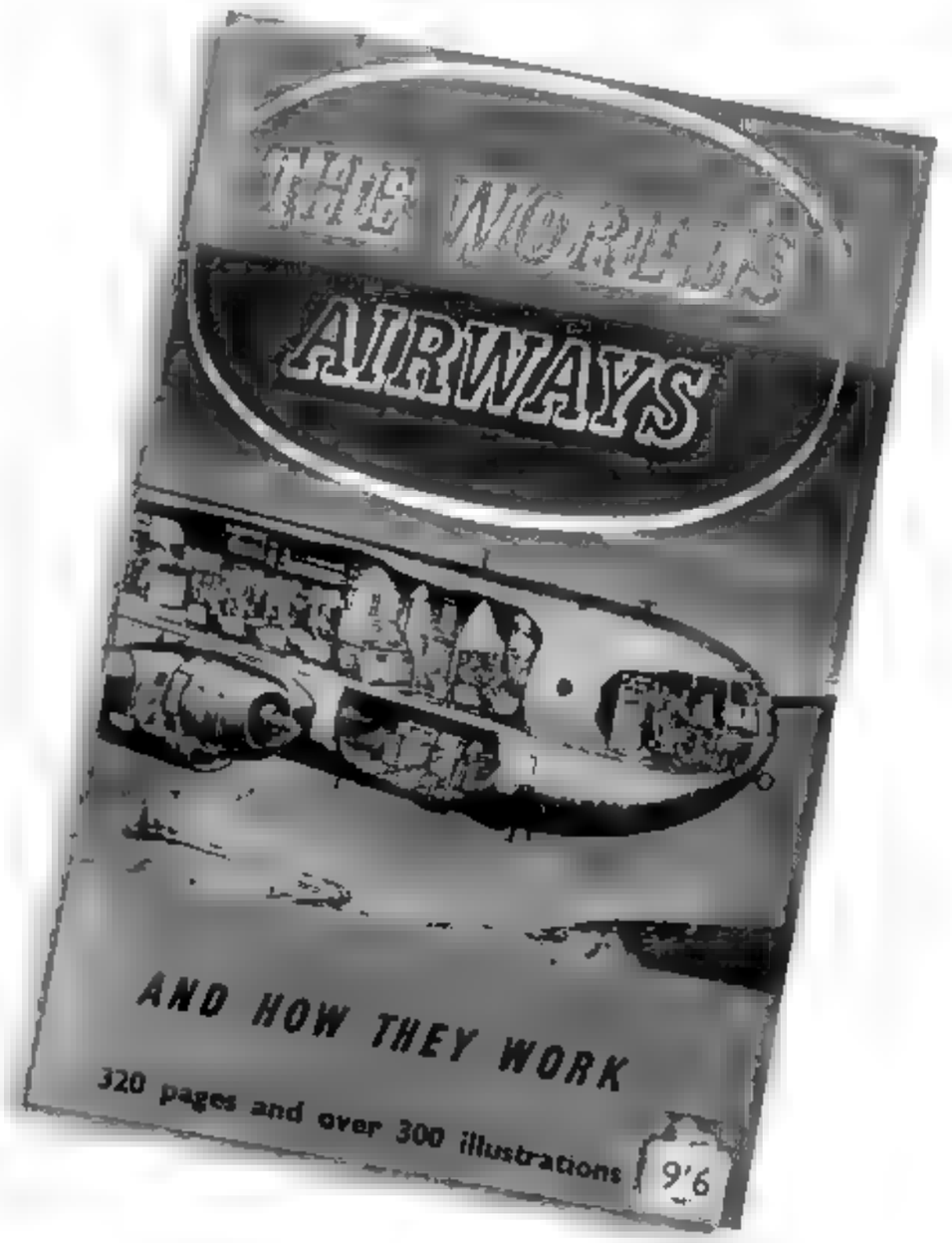
- *Civil Aircraft* (1969)
- *Modern Ships* (1969)
- *Trains Today* (1969)
- *Military Aircraft* (1969)
- *Space Travel* (1970)
- *Naval Ships* (1970)
- *Racing Cars* (1970)
- *Hovercraft* (1970)
- *Exploring Under the Seas* (1971?)
- *Famous Steam Trains* (1971?)
- *World Car Speed Records* (1971?)
- *Tanks and Armoured Cars* (1971?)



THE ODHAMS BOOKS

In addition to working on *Modern Wonder* for Odhams, Wood contributed illustrations and cutaways for a selection of non-fiction hardback books that Odhams published in the 1940s. These 9in x 6in hardback books with dust jackets featured many black & white photographs and illustrations on their given topics. Collectors should be aware that none of these books are illustrated exclusively by Wood and, while all the titles here have Wood illustrations, the numbers vary and later titles sometimes reprint Wood illustrations from earlier books.

- *Britain's Wonderful Fighting Forces* (Editor: Captain Ellison Hawks - 1940)
- *Britain's Modern Army* (1942)
- *Britain's Wonderful Air Force* (Editor: Air Commodore P. F. M. Fellowes – 1942)
- *Britain's Glorious Navy* (Editor: Admiral Sir Reginald H. S. Bacon – 1943)
- *Britain's Merchant Navy* (Editor: Sir Archibald Hurd -1944) "With more than forty explanatory drawings specially prepared by L. Ashwell Wood"
- *The Secrets of Other People's Jobs* (1944)
- *Warfare Today* (Editor: Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, Major-General J. F. C. Fuller & Air Marshal Sir Patrick Playfair - 1944)
- *Railways, Ships and Aeroplanes Illustrated* (Cecil J. Allen, J. V. Stone & Captain Norman Macmillan – 1945)
- *The World's Railways and How They Work* (1947)
- *The Complete Book of Motor-cars, Railways, Ships and Aeroplanes* (1949)
- *The World's Airways and How They Work* (Editor: Captain J. W. G. James & John Stroud -1950)
- *Odhams History of the Second World War* (Editor: H. C. O'Neill - 2 volumes - 1951)

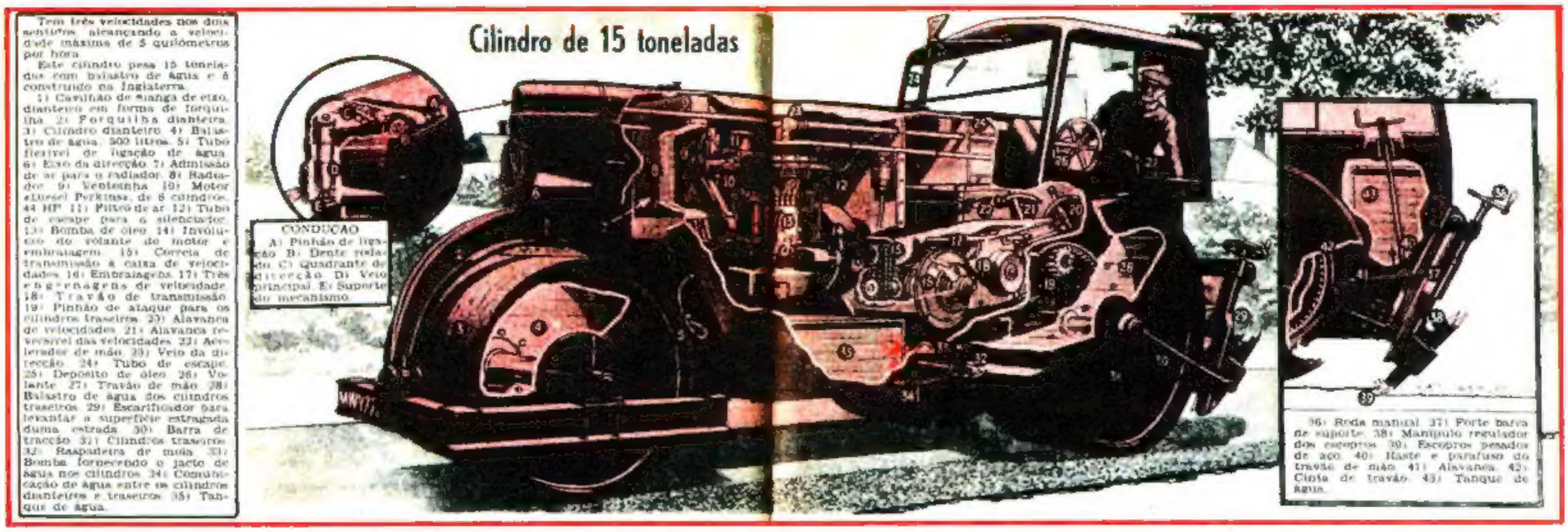


FOREIGN CUTAWAYS

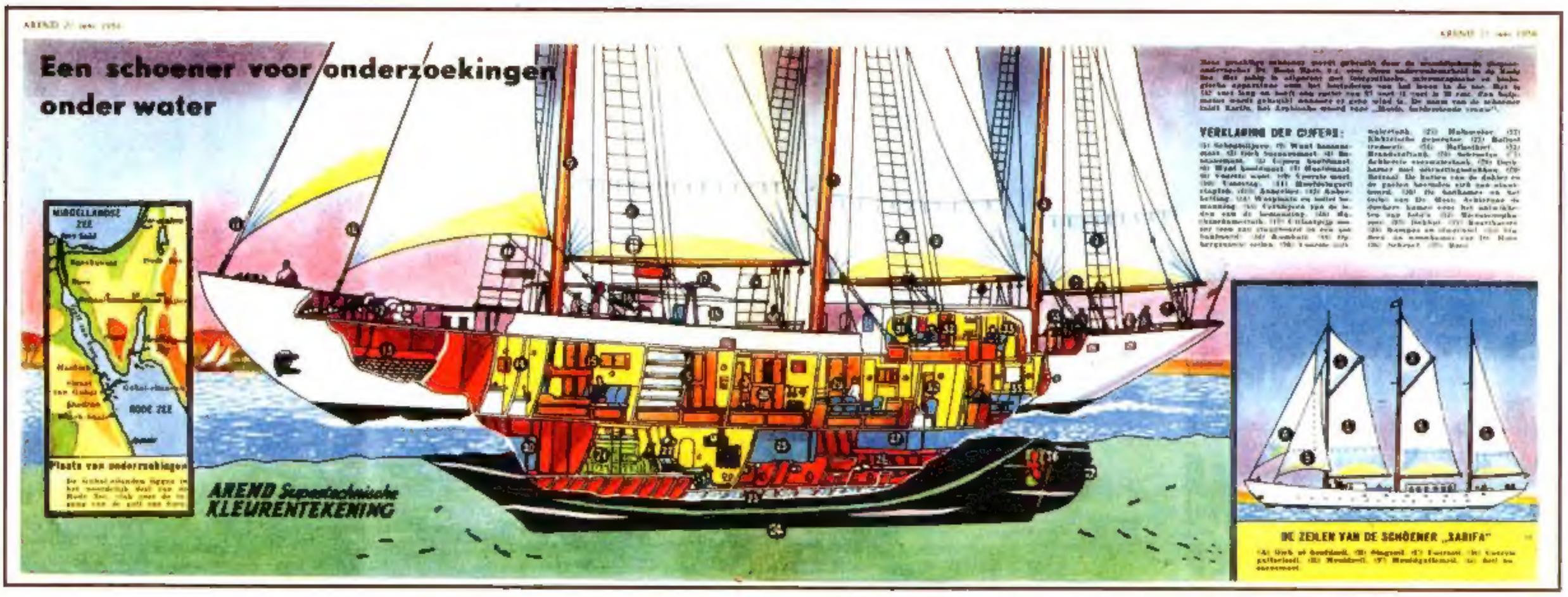
As the *EAGLE* comic strips, and sometimes even its format, were sold to foreign publishers with characters like Dan Dare becoming Dan Durf in Holland, Dan Djerv in Norway and Den Deri in Croatia, some of the foreign editions of the comic also reprinted the cutaways.

Since translated text rarely takes up the exact area of the original English text, this could be a problem with comic strip pages in which speech balloons and text panels had to be expanded to take in extra text thus covering more of the original artwork or, conversely, not taking up as much space and leaving the original speech balloons looking odd as they were too large for the new words. As all the text, other than the number circles, was added to the cutaway artwork during production, and with it not being restricted by speech balloons and rarely limited by other framing devices on the artboard, the cutaway work was well suited to be used in foreign publications.

In Holland *EAGLE* became *Arend*, which published a selection of *EAGLE*, *Swift* and *Girl* strips as well as the early long format cutaways, including many by Wood, in its centrespread under the title of 'Arend Supertechnische Kleurentekening', literally a "super technical colour drawing". Other foreign titles to publish translated versions of the early cutaways included *Il Giorno dei Ragazzi* in Italy, *Tita* in Portugal, *Hauk* in Norway and *Falken* in Sweden. ❑


Cilindro de 15 toneladas
CONDUÇÃO
A) Pinhão de ligação B) Dente relação C) Quadrante de direcção D) Veio principal E) Suporte do mecanismo

This 15-ton diesel road-roller cutaway by Leslie Ashwell Wood appeared in EAGLE Vol. 5 No. 41 (8th October, 1954) before this appearance, rather less colourfully, in *Tita* No. 30 (11th May, 1955)



Ashwell Wood's cutaway of Dr. Hans Hass' ship 'Xarifa' first appeared in *EAGLE* Vol. 7 No. 1 (6th January, 1956) before its appearance two and a half years later in *Arend* (21st June, 1958)

POSTBAG

Please send letters for publication to: Keith Howard, 25A Station Road, Harrow HA1 2UA

Letters may be edited for space, or other reasons

Dear *Eagle Times*,

Alan Vince and I have a different view of David Hunt. Hunt, like so many of the Fleetway editors, was actually quite an abrasive character who had little or no time for "fans". Barrie Tomlinson was the same. While in Irwin House I did occasionally ask Hunt for a lettering job on *EAGLE* but was always refused; I even asked Steve McManus (whom I dubbed McManiac), the barmy editor of *2000AD*, for lettering work but he wouldn't give me any either. These people had their "favourites", such as John Aldrich and Jack Potter and Tom Frame, and I was always the outsider. I'm also vaguely irritated by the knowledge that Alan was often in Irwin House, as I was, yet he never looked me up and I,conversely, never knew that he was around.

Nobody seemed to know or care that I was actually quite interested in the "comics" and not merely just doing a job. As a freelance letterer I had a very low status in both King's Reach Tower and Irwin House. And then I lost touch with all that mob when the comics production went freelance from 1st November, 1988 and I had to take *Whizzer and Chips* lettering to Pat Kelleher's office in Covent Garden and my *Roy of the Rovers* lettering to Ian Vosper's house in Merton Park.

So I disagree emphatically with Alan when he refers to the changes that happened then being mostly "for the good". I have a feeling that Tomlinson himself took over the editing of *EAGLE* on more occasions than Alan recalls; Tomlinson became one of the freelance editors working from home and called himself Creative Editorial Services. He was responsible for payments, but it was Ian Vosper who actually gave me the work (and a cup of coffee!) on my weekly collection and delivery visits to his home. The situation lasted a couple of years, as everything gradually closed down and by about 1992/3 there was absolutely nothing for me.

Best Wishes, **DAVID GOULD** (East Grinstead)

ET: *It's always good to get another opinion from someone who also worked in the building where the "new" Eagle was produced!*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

Thanks for the Autumn magazine. The photo repro was excellent in the issue and a good balance of articles.

I had to get in touch when I read of the death of Geoff Provins – his health was not good of late and it was sad to hear he died alone. I shall miss his informative letters and UK comic news.

Best Wishes **WILLIAM RUDLING** (Leeds)

Dear *Eagle Times*,

A very excellent Autumn issue. I was most impressed with the well researched and presented feature on Leslie Ashwell Wood.

I was particularly pleased with the art on the Charles Chilton book, at last an autobiography. The photo on the cover is a photo session I designed for *Radio Times*. It was a delight to see it again.

Congratulations on a wonderfully inspired journal. I always look forward to receiving it.

Kindest Regards, **DAVID DRIVER** (London)

ET: *Thanks for your compliments, David. We try to bring something new to each magazine and shortly we shall have done it for 25 years!*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

The Autumn issue of *E.T.* was particularly good.

It was a shock to read about Geoff Provins. He was an unusual character but a massively enthusiastic fan of 'Dan Dare' and *EAGLE*. We used to write to each other occasionally about 'Dan Dare' matters and exchange Christmas cards.

Best Wishes **STEVE WINDERS** (Cornwall)

ET: *Geoff will be missed by all who knew him and we have had several tributes to him.*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

I was very impressed with the latest *Eagle Times*. With reference to the article on Leslie Ashwell Wood, if it is of any use, I have found a reference to him: born July 29th,1903 at Brent GRO 5a 923. I could not find an entry in the 1911 census although there are a number of Woods who might fit his father living in the Brentwood areas in 1901.

Best Wishes **ANDREW SIMPSON** (Manchester)

ET: *Thanks for the information, Andrew. Every little helps!*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

Thanks for the Autumn issue of *ET* and for doing such a good job of my Leslie Ashwell Wood article. I especially liked his drawing of *The Duchess of Gloucester* from *Modern Wonder* on the rear cover as it's an issue I don't own and the original artwork is on sale at the Book Palace at £500. It was nice to see the final version.

My next task is a short piece on Bruce Cornwell's *EAGLE* cutaways with comment from Bruce and I'll send it on when done.

Best wishes, **JEREMY BRIGGS**, (Edinburgh)

ET: *Thanks Jeremy. It's amazing that the artwork should be on sale even after seventy three years!*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

You're done it by the skin of your teeth. I was seriously considering letting my membership of *Eagle Times* lapse, on the grounds that in 10, or even 15, years of reading our magazine, there has been no mention, not one word, on the artist who was the reason I bought the *EAGLE*, week after week, all those years ago.

At last you've come up with a splendid article by Jeremy Briggs on my hero of the '50s and '60s, Leslie Ashwell Wood, and with the promise of more to come too. Please pass on my appreciation to Mr. Briggs.

I have of course, long been familiar with the *Modern Wonder* magazine and Odhams books etc., but he makes no mention of two large volumes I found a Car Boot sale for a few pence, both edited by Charles Ray, and which I would date from clues in the text to 1936 or '37.

One, of the *World of Wonder*, has 50 or 60 drawings by 'LW' or 'L. Wood' on technical marvels of the time, similar stuff to what we would later become familiar with in *EAGLE*.

The second book *Romance of the Nation*, over 700 pages bound together in one volume, is the history of England from the Saxons and Normans, up to the Tudor age. The book is stuffed full with Wood's drawings of life in medieval times – castles, siege instruments, defence mechanisms, as well as more domestic pursuits such as weaving, bell-making etc.

On the unlikely assumption that Jeremy Briggs hasn't come across these volumes, I enclose a few examples of some typical illustrations, including what I think is my favourite – Henry VIII's warship *The Great Harry*.

Many thanks for a continuingly interesting magazine,

TONY ENGLISH (London)

ET: *Glad we did the right thing eventually, Tony, and many thanks for sending in those superb drawings, some of which we hope to feature in a future issue.*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

The image of the hydrofoil from 'The Man from Nowhere' was also used on the cover of the second *Dan Dare Stamp Album*.

Regards, **JAMES HOWARD** (Kislingbury)

Dear *Eagle Times*,

Whilst you have had to increase the membership fee due to increasing printing and postal costs, I for one, feel that it is still great value for money for such a quality magazine.

I enjoyed the Autumn 2011 *Eagle Times*, particularly the 'Luck of the Legion' article and 'Working with David Hunt' by Alan Vince. In fact I have to say that Alan always writes informative and interesting articles, so please keep him on board.

All the best to the Editorial Team from one happy reader.

Yours sincerely, **IAN WILSON** (Co. Down, N. Ireland)

ET: *Music to our ears, Ian. Many thanks for your encouragement. It is much appreciated.*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

I was surprised to see that the hydrofoil craft in 'The Man from Nowhere' really did exist. Having written that I remember travelling about by hydrofoil when staying in Greece ! It is a very enjoyable mode of travel. I recommend it to you.

I was sorry to learn of Geoff Provins' death. In his letters to *Eagle Times* he always had an interesting point of view to discuss.

Seasons Greetings to you all. Yours thoughtfully,

ANDREW COFFEY (Great Yarmouth)

ET: *Yes, Andrew, we will miss Geoff's letters. He was a most loyal and enthusiastic member for many years.*

Dear *Eagle Times*,

Geoff Provins' death came as a shock to those who knew him and his input to the 'Postbag' page will be sorely missed. Ironically the last time I spoke to Geoff on the phone he said that he had discovered that we were distantly related through my father's side of the family. Alas, that generation, along with Geoff are no longer left to verify this. He will be much missed for his tremendous enthusiasm for all things *EAGLE*.

KEITH HOWARD (Harrow) ❑

An EAGLE Wordsearch

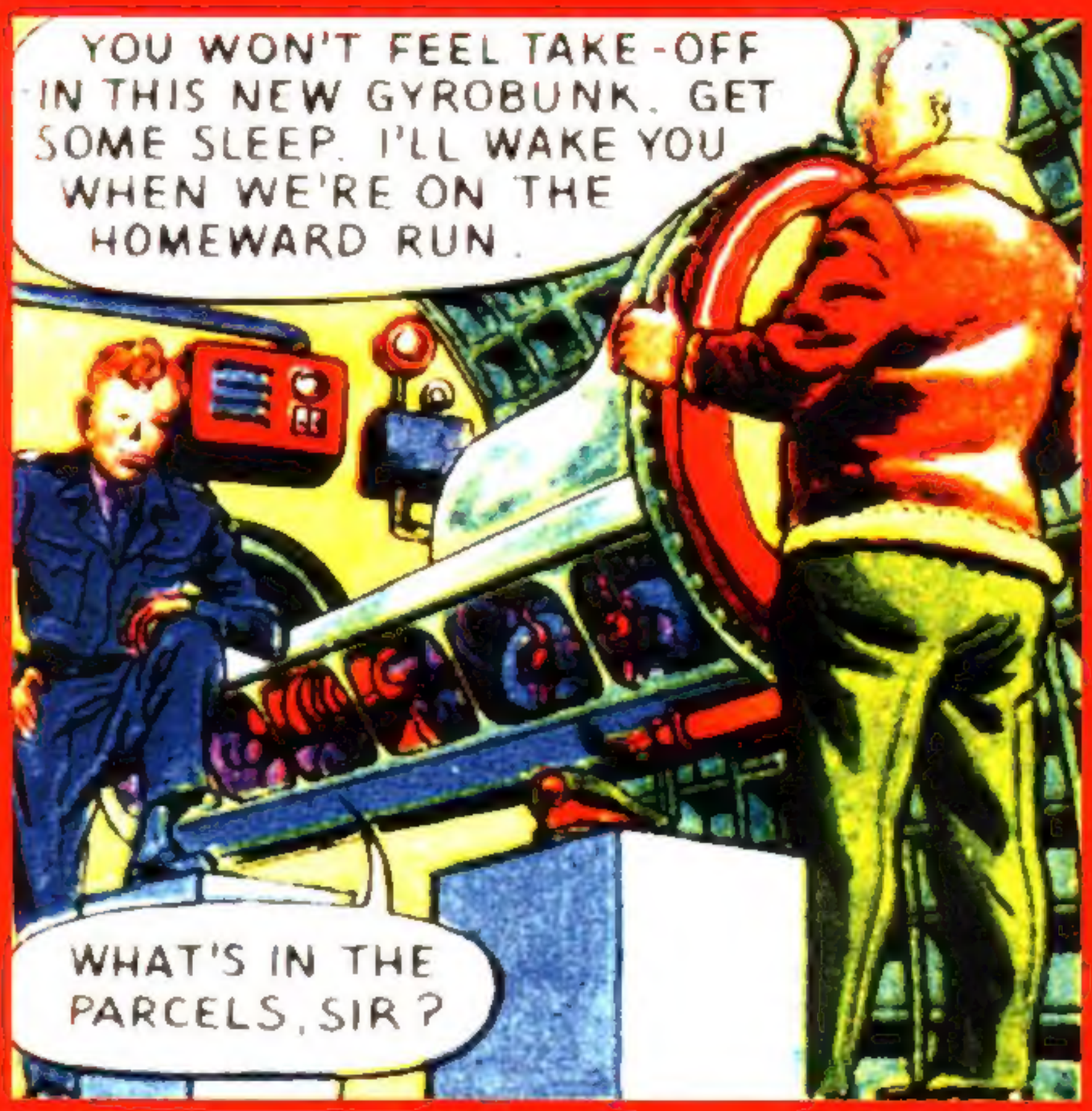
compiled by David Gould

Cross through the words, which may be in any direction, as you find them; six are from Vol. 16 (1965). The remaining unused letters spell out the title of *EAGLE*'s Letters Page in that year.

M	K	E	N	H	S	E	R
P	O	M	N	E	R	O	O
H	K	O	A	R	G	L	I
A	C	Y	R	E	G	E	R
N	I	O	R	L	R	U	P
T	H	G	O	U	A	R	O
O	C	U	W	M	N	K	D
M	I	K	E	L	A	N	E

1. -- Fighters Over The Sea: an Ashwell Wood cutaway.
2. Bruce's sidekick, Bill -- .
3. The Master of Vendalasia.
4. A warrior priest of Phantos.
5. The Guinea Pig.
6. A silent character.
7. Dimworthy's school.
8. Dan's father.
9. " -- gauge railways have got some use after all!" (from 'Death By The Dawn')
10. Mechanical -- featured in John Batchelor's cutaway.

Solution to previous *EAGLE* Wordsearch (*ET* Vol 24 No 3): 'Ride for Life'


YOU WON'T FEEL TAKE-OFF IN THIS NEW GYROBUNK. GET SOME SLEEP. I'LL WAKE YOU WHEN WE'RE ON THE HOMEWARD RUN.
WHAT'S IN THE PARCELS, SIR?

Front cover: From 'Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future' EAGLE, No. 37 (22nd December, 1950)
Rear cover: From 'Operation Plum Pudding' - *Eagle Annual No. 5*
***Eagle Times* design/DTP layout: Will Grenham**